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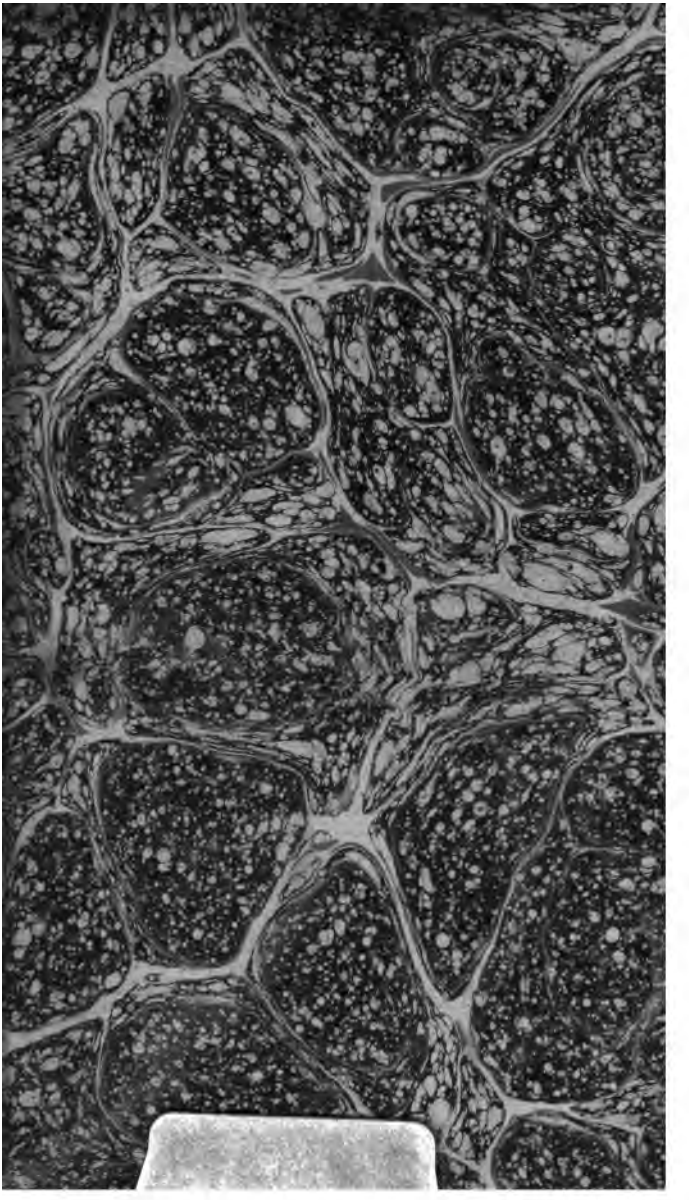

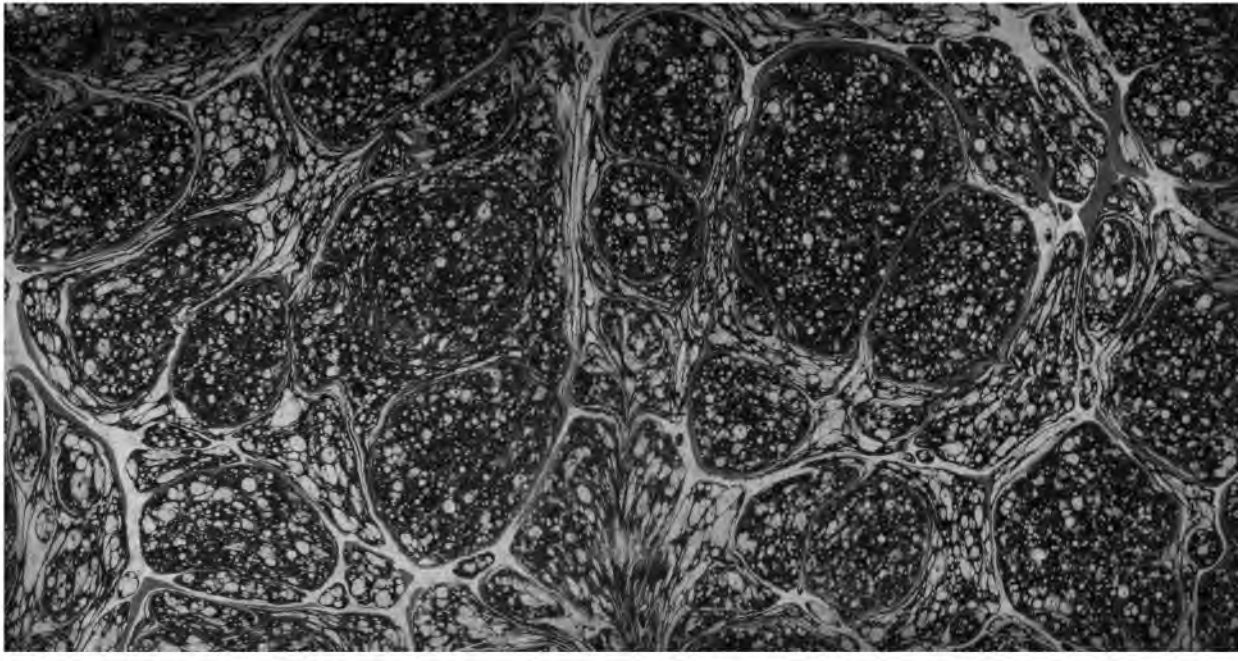

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DONALD MONTEITH.

A NOVEL.

Printed by J. Darling, Leadenhall-Street, London.

DONALD MONTEITH,

THE

HANDSOMEST MAN OF THE AGE.

A Novel.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

By SELINA DAVENPORT,

AUTHOR OF

THE HYPOCRITE, OR THE MODERN JANUS; THE SONS OF THE VISCOUNT AND DAUGHTERS OF THE EARL, &c.

"Here are the pangs of wounded pride,
Of blasted hope, of wither'd joy:
The prop she lean'd on pierc'd her side,
The flame she fed burns to destroy.

In vain does Memory renew
The scenes once ting'd in transport's dye;
The sad reverse soon starts to view,
And turns the past to agony.
Even conscious Virtue cannot cure
The pangs to every feeling due!"

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DONALD MONTEITH.

CHAPTER I.

THE heart of Mary was by this visit of Monteith rendered light and happy. He had not only discovered her residence, but openly expressed his attachment, and his hopes of having it returned. Mrs. Byron, the kind and affectionate friend of her deceased mother, espoused his cause, and sanctioned his visits; how then could Mary be otherwise than happy? how could she imagine that so bright a prospect would ever be overcast by the stormy clouds of adversity and despair? Mon-

teith was to spend the day with her, and Mary rose earlier than usual, to devote as much time as she could spare to her music. Nor was the important business of the toilette neglected; even the sitting-room was put tastefully in order; fresh flowers were gathered, and arranged by Mary, with an alacrity and care that testified her anxiety to please.

Mrs. Byron smiled on her affectionately. "Shall I send for some plaid ribbon, Mary?" said she, significantly. "You cannot surely do better than at this moment to take a lesson from the *prudent* Mrs. Scorpion."

Mary smiled also, yet an involuntary blush darted across her cheek, at the recollection of her adopted mother's improper mode of expressing her regard for the fascinating Scotchman.

Monteith, agreeable to the wishes of Mrs. Byron, was with them long before the hour of dinner. His eyes betrayed to her his impatience to learn the truth of what he had heard; and she, ever mindful

to oblige, soon made an excuse to leave them to themselves, saying, as she quitted the apartment, that she must not forget to give strict orders to be from home, should some spirit of evil send Mrs. Scorpion to disturb their repose by her unwelcome presence.

Monteith no sooner found himself possessed of the opportunity he sighed for, than he hesitated, and felt embarrassed in what manner to proceed. Mary beheld his varying features, and felt his hand, which grasped her own, tremble. Raising her eyes timidly to his, she perceived them bent on herself, full of tenderness, yet mingled with the anxiety which agitated him. "How weak I am, beloved Mary," said he, drawing her gently towards him, "thus to lose one moment of this delightful interview! Oh, you know not what I have suffered on your account, since that blissful day when I drew from you a confession of your tender sentiments in my favour! Do you repent having made

it, my sweetest Mary, or are you still willing to repeat the same rapturous words?"

Mary felt the pressure of his lips deepen the crimson on her cheek, yet so passionately did she love him, that she hesitated not to murmur forth in trembling accents the confirmation of his hopes.

"Then I defy the malice of Mrs. Scorpion," said he, exultingly, as he folded her to his bosom, "and of the whole world; I ask only thy heart, my Mary, thy undivided heart. Heaven cannot bestow a gift to me more precious."

Mary raised her head from his shoulder; tears of grateful love filled her eyes, and her countenance was rendered more beautiful by the visible struggle between the natural delicacy of her mind and the tenderness of her feelings. "My heart, dearest Monteith! as soon as I had seen you, was yours beyond the power of recalling. Until then, I was a stranger to that passion of which I had read and heard so much—until then, I was ignorant of the nature of those emotions which I had seen, and wondered at

their energy; but I no sooner heard the sound of your voice, and beheld your form and features, than I became acquainted with the strength of that affection which I feel can only cease with my existence."

Monteith caught her rapturously to his breast—"And is it then true, adored Mary! that your feelings were so congenial with my own? Am I indeed so blessed as to be the first man for whom your little trembling heart has beat with tenderness? Sweetest Mary! the enthusiasm of my love is such, that this idea increases its ardour, and my affection is raised to a romantic adoration by the belief that I am your *first lover*, the object of your *first* and *free* choice. Yet, Mary, Mrs. Scorpion has insidiously hinted, that the heart which I so highly prize was not insensible to the pleadings of a stranger, whose glowing eloquence seduced you into a consent to meet him clandestinely. Is this true, my Mary, or is it only the offspring of her malicious invention?"

Mary, hurt, surprised, and confused, for

a moment remained silent; then, with the candour of innocence, which sought no disguise, she recounted to him the whole of what had passed between her and the friend of her childhood. Gratitude at the recollection of his worth animated her into a display of eloquence which surprised even her lover, while every doubt vanished at the conclusion of her recital, and he became satisfied that her heart had not been touched, that it remained for him to complete the work begun by friendship.

"Mary, my beloved! my own dearest Mary!" he cried, "I will not conceal from you that this noble friend of yours has not forgotten you—that he is still anxious to renew your acquaintance, and that he has called on Mrs. Scorpion to inquire after you, and to solicit her permission to pay his addresses to you." He paused to wait the effect this might have on Mary; he saw her colour vary, and the lustre of her eyes increase; her whole form became animated, as she learnt that her first friend had not forgotten the little girl

he condescended to advise, and for whose welfare he had manifested so generous an interest. Monteith saw and trembled, yet he continued, "Mrs. Scorpion decidedly refused his proposals, and I am convinced, Mary, from circumstances, that the only reason which prevented her from effectually getting rid of you and her fears at once, by marrying you to this stranger, was his rank in life, which would then have placed you above Arabella. How do you feel, Mary? Examine well the nature of your present feelings; even if they are inimical to my peace, yet fear not to avow them; I can die sooner than live, to suppose that you would ever at a future period regret the decision of this morning."

Mary cast on him a look of reproachful tenderness, and half withdrew her hand.

"Nay, my sweet Mary, chide as you please; but I do not resign this lovely hand unless you give it to another. I wish you to inquire into yourself, and into the cause of that secret delight which animated you so much while I was speaking of your

early friend. I have no doubt, from his air and manner, and still more so from the conduct of Mrs. Scorpion, that he is anxious to make you his wife; that he has the means of conferring on you rank and power, and all the luxuries of wealth; while I, limited in my fortune and my prospects, have only to offer you a heart which beats but for you, and which would freely give up the world and all its allurements to live only with you."

"To doubt for a moment the constancy of my affection," replied Mary, bursting into tears of wounded pride and love, "is so ungenerous, that I can hardly believe that you are in earnest. Oh that I had the letters of my first friend to shew you! but I gave them to Judith, who never returned them. They would at once convince you of the state of my regard for the writer, and of his inability to excite in my bosom any other sentiment than that of the most grateful friendship. Had I a mind capable of being swayed by rank and fortune, I should not have refused to elope

with him, when he acknowledged that he could confer on me both, especially as I then felt most keenly the mortifying situation I was placed in. The nobleness of his whole conduct towards me calls for my warmest gratitude; and if I had always kept in view his advice, I should not, as now, suffer from the injustice of your suspicions."

"Forgive me, adored Mary!" exclaimed Monteith, "for having betrayed to you the chief failing of my nature. I feel that so great is my love, so unbounded my attachment, that I could not bear that any human being should share with me in yours. I even doubt whether or no I could allow of your shewing, in my presence, too much fondness for my own child. I would, if possible, possess every thought of yours, my dear Mary, and thus engross not only your heart, but your mind."

Mary expressively smiled her pardon.—"Dearest Monteith," she cried, "such are my sentiments also; my affection is

the same as yours; I only ask to live but for you; and I am certain that I should be the most miserable creature in existence were it ever to be my fate to be a witness to your paying to another those attentions which, however trifling they may seem to some, will constitute my principal happiness."

Monteith embraced her tenderly—"Then you have decided, my Mary, to share my destiny, be it what it may? Ah, my sweetest love, I would fain conceal from your knowledge every thing which can give you a moment's uneasiness; yet—" here his voice trembled, and his face became pale as death, "yet, Mary, I will not take advantage of your innocent fondness; I will not accept the treasure of your hand without first disclosing to you a part of my singular circumstances; perhaps I may weaken your resolution, may shake your constancy, but it is necessary that before you irrevocably become mine, you should know what my mysterious situation demands of you to perform."

Mary raised her eyes confidingly to his, conscious as she gazed on the innumerable charms which were centered in his countenance, that her fidelity would remain unshaken, whatever might be his disclosure.

"Perhaps," said Monteith, with gloomy gravity of manner, "you may be ignorant, my Mary, that I have a father and sisters still living on the estate of my ancestors. The house of my childhood, the scene of many a boyish rapture, is now become hateful to me. I have been betrayed, deceived, perhaps ruined by their mistaken kindness. The home of my infancy can never receive my adored Mary; my father, my sisters, would not acknowledge her; circumstances demand that she should live in retirement, until I am able to quit my profession; then it is my intention to leave England for ever. Until that long-wished-for moment arrives, I would, if possible, conceal our union from every one. Can you consent, my Mary, to these hard, hard conditions?—Can you resolve

to bury yourself from every eye but mine, concealing even from Mrs. Byron the reasons of our total seclusion from society, not even inquiring into them yourself?—Can you do this? and thus prove that woman's heart is capable of the noblest sacrifice, and that love alone can make amends for every other deprivation?"

Mary, though surprised, and rather alarmed by what he now for the first time disclosed to her, was too much in love to hesitate for an instant. She pressed his hand to her lips with romantic fervour, even glad of an opportunity of testifying the firmness of her attachment. "I can do this and more," said she, "if necessary to the happiness of him I love. Give me but yourself, let me live and breathe but for you, I ask no other companion, no other reward but your confidence and undiminished affection; nor will I ever seek to pry into the cause of this strange mystery, convinced that in becoming mine, you must, like myself, be actuated by no ordinary passion, and probably make a much greater sacrifice than

I do. If I have any regret, beloved Monteith! it is that you should have a grief which I am not permitted to share."

"Angel of love and purity!" exclaimed Monteith, passionately pressing his lips to hers, "I swear to devote myself to you! whatever the malignity of my enemies may devise, they cannot rob me of thy heart, nor of thyself; even in death I will call thee mine; I will be thine only; and we will prove, by our matchless tenderness for each other, that the cruelty of circumstances, which I dare not explain, even to thee, my Mary, cannot separate two hearts that throb but for each other. Yet if, at a future time, the mystery to which I now am compelled to have recourse should be developed, will you not upbraid me for my selfish idolatry, which sought only to secure to myself a treasure, the possession of which could alone bind me to the world, and make me forget its injuries?"

"Never! never!" cried Mary, warmly; "never, beloved Monteith! shall a murmur escape my lips. Promise only that

nothing shall divide us, that I shall even follow you, should you be ordered abroad. Let us not quit each other, and I can bear every difficulty, every danger, if you are by my side."

Monteith, affected by this artless display of a fixed and unshaken attachment, was not proof against its effect. He pressed her to his bosom, almost in an agony of fondness, while the tears fell on her cheek—sad proof that all was not at peace within himself.

Fortunately for them, the entrance of Mrs. Byron recalled Monteith to his recollection. He started from his seat, and taking her hand, said, "My best friend, our sweet Mary has cleared all my doubts—has convinced me of the baseness of Mrs. Scorpion, and of her own tenderness. She has consented to be mine, and I am the happiest of men."

"I am glad to hear it," replied Mrs. Byron, pressing his hand affectionately. "Long may you continue so! But dinner is just ready, and I want you to draw

the wine for me; after that is over, we will consult upon the best method of securing to you the hand of Mary, before Mrs. Scorpion can withdraw her from my protection."

The cloth was no sooner removed than Monteith, with eagerness, pressed his beloved Mary to give him an immediate right to protect her from the unjust tyranny of Mrs. Scorpion. "I shall be miserable," said he, "until you become mine. I would, if possible, this very night, secure to myself the sole privilege of directing your future actions. I fear lest your tormentor, in some sudden fit of caprice, should remove you once again from my sight. Tell me, my own sweetest Mary! on what blissful day you will bestow on me your hand?"

Mary's face and bosom crimsoned with blushes—"I have acknowledged to you my affection," said she, in a low voice, "and have made you the master of my fate. Situated as I am, without the blessing of a parent's sanction to our union,

and ignorant as to the propriety of thus hastily disposing of myself for life, I can only trust to the kind friendship of Mrs. Byron, who will, I am certain, direct me for the best. My heart, dearest Monteith, is yours; and I trust that I shall never have cause to repent the excess of tenderness which made me so soon betray the power you have over it. Do not, however, be too hasty in an affair of such importance."

Mrs. Byron kissed her with maternal solicitude, then said, "The peculiarity of the circumstances in which you are both placed, will, I think, warrant the breaking through the usual form of delay until settlements, &c. are adjusted. I believe, my dear girl, that in giving your hand to Monteith, you secure to yourself a tender and inestimable friend, and that your own happiness will be considerably augmented by your becoming his wife. Mrs. Scorpion may, as he has just observed, take it into her head to remove you from under my care, and thus involve you in useless

vexations. If you can make up your mind to become the wife of our dear Monteith at the expiration of a month, you may as well consent with a good grace to his wishes at a much earlier period, and thus escape the malice of Mrs. Scorpion, and the fury of her disappointed schemes."

Monteith looked his gratitude to Mrs. Byron, as he rose and went round to where Mary was seated. Taking half her chair, he flung his arm round her waist, and pressed his lips to her blushing cheek. "Dearest Mary!" said he, in a voice of exquisite tenderness, "you have consented to unite your fate with mine; be generous, and increase my devotion, by agreeing to hasten the completion of my felicity. I have already suffered much on your account; my increasing dislike to visiting the Scorpions, and my change of manners whenever I have lately called on them, may add to the suspicions of Mrs. Scorpion. I would not have you again become an inmate of her house for the world. Tell me then, my beloved Mary! if I

may solace myself with the hope that your will, if Mrs. Byron approves of it, become mine on this day week?"

Mary could not reply; her timidity, her natural bashfulness, made her situation painful, and she found herself unable to utter the words which fixed for ever her destiny.

"Silence gives consent," said Mrs. Byron, smiling on them affectionately, "and Mary's reply must come from my lips, not her own. This day week, my dear Monteith, she will be yours, and poor Arabella Scorpion must then give up all hopes of ever realizing her mother's foolish expectations. Let me not, however, lose my dear child on that day; suffer her to remain with me, until Mrs. Scorpion signifies her intention of taking her from my protection."

"In becoming the husband of my lovely Mary," replied Monteith, "you must not only receive me as your son, but continue to her your maternal counsels, and by your presence, during my occasional

absence, enable her to endure the retirement, which, for a time, will be necessary. I could wish, for this reason, to procure a house near yours, that you might be enabled to pass the chief of your time with her, in case you should feel disinclined to take up your residence entirely with us."

"You have made me happy by this declaration," said Mrs. Byron. "I love Mary too sincerely not to rejoice at the prospect of seeing her daily. The house I now live in I am attached to from many little circumstances; it has been my abode for nearly eight years, and I should therefore quit it with regret. I only wish that it was large enough to accommodate you; but I think there is one now vacant, scarce a quarter of a mile from this, and from its retired situation, being enclosed in a beautiful garden, will just suit you and Mary."

Monteith appeared pleased by this intelligence, and promised to call the next morning, and go with her to look at the cottage. He then, out of delicacy to the embarrassed feelings of his Mary, changed

for a while the subject which engrossed his whole soul, but which added to the distressing confusion of Miss Fitzroy—a confusion, however, which did not render her less dear to the heart of her lover, conscious, as he now was, of being the man of her choice, and the entire possessor of her tenderest affections. His own private situation, the nature of which he dared not explain, even to her, who evidently gloried in devoting herself to his happiness, made him particularly anxious to become master of her hand as early as possible, lest any unforeseen accident should deprive him of his idolized treasure, and thus for ever bereave him of his only hope of enjoying that domestic tranquillity, which, until he had seen her, appeared lost beyond the possibility of his recovering.

It was not to be supposed that a man like Donald Monteith, rich in personal and intellectual endowments, could arrive to the age of three-and-twenty without having felt and acknowledged the force and power of female loveliness. Many a

beautiful form had been decked with scrupulous care to attract his attention—many a noble fair had thought herself too happy could she but secure his society for an evening's amusement. Monteith, it is true, had yielded to the allurements of transitory passion; but never until he beheld the neglected orphan, did his heart acknowledge the supremacy of love. The first hour passed in her company awakened in his bosom all its dormant fervour, and he soon experienced the romantic enthusiasm of an attachment which *might increase*, but which he was too well convinced could never *diminish*, while that bosom was capable of being agitated either by love or by despair.

CHAPTER II.

In thus hastily consenting to the clandestine marriage of Miss Fitzroy, Mrs. Byron

was certainly to blame, since she was ignorant even of the state of Monteith's domestic affairs, or of the amount of that fortune which was to provide for a wife and family; yet, strange as it may appear, this very remissness sprung from an affection, which ought to have rendered her more cautious in the disposal of its object. She entertained for Monteith the highest esteem, and placed in him a confidence equal to that of Mary. His dress, his manner of living, the rank of those with whom he associated, all bespoke independence, and Mrs. Byron had become convinced by experience, that wealth is not necessary to happiness; neither did it seem requisite to constitute that of her young friend. The chief motive of Mrs. Byron's conduct was to withdraw Mary from the slender protection afforded her by her adopted mother, to snatch her from the temptation she was exposed to under her roof, and to secure to her for life the tender husband, the gentle and steady guardian of her honour and peace.

This, she imagined, could only be effected by uniting her to Donald Monteith; and Mrs. Byron, therefore, in her own mind, conceived that she was acting the maternal part, in affording them all the assistance in her power, and in hastening an event which the delicacy of Mary alone induced her to retard. She consequently, as soon as Monteith had quitted them for the night, congratulated her beloved orphan upon her approaching felicity, telling her that she would shortly become the envy of her sex.

Mary smiled, but her smile was forced; her heart felt not as light and cheerful as it ought, and a tear involuntarily fell on her cheek. Mrs. Byron noticed it with inquisitive alarm, as she pressed her to her friendly bosom. "Dearest Mary," said she, "why do I see in your eyes tears that proceed not from rapture, but some secret uneasiness? Have you a fear, a doubt, my child, that you will not entrust me with? Is there a possibility of your repenting of what has passed?—Speak, my

child! Affection for you alone directs my actions. If you feel any repugnance to this union, tell me, before things go any further—before Monteith and I call to look at the cottage."

"Repugnance!" said Mary, half raising her head from the bosom of her friend, "repugnance to becoming the wife of Monteith! Oh, my dear madam, if you knew the extent of my affection, you would perhaps chide me for having nourished a passion which engrosses my whole soul. Next to my Creator, I adore Monteith!—I live, I breathe but for him! and if at this moment a tear fills my eye, a sigh swells my breast, it is as unaccountable to myself as to you."

Mrs. Byron kissed her affectionately—"You remind me," she replied, "strongly of your amiable mother. Her mind, like yours, was endowed with too much sensibility for her own peace; and when she came to see me for the last time, my heart misgave me that hers was not in unison with the smiles on her countenance."

Mary hastily wiped away her tears, and begged of Mrs. Byron to tell her all she knew concerning her deceased parent. Mrs. Byron assented to the wish of her young charge, though it could not fail to recall to her own mind recollections far from pleasing.

"When I was in my four-and-thirtieth year," said the friend of Mary, "I resolved, in consequence of the nature of my domestic concerns, which would have broken the heart of any woman but myself, to retire for some years to the peaceful abode of my widowed mother, and, if I could not recover my own lost happiness, to contribute at least to hers, as much as lay in my power, by my presence and dutiful attentions. The house of my mother was not far distant from that occupied by Mr. Seymour and his lovely family, to whom I was introduced, and to whose eldest daughter, then only fourteen, I immediately attached myself. Notwithstanding the vast difference in our ages, which the

vivacity of my temper, and the extreme youthfulness of my appearance, rendered less perceptible by several years, we became constant companions and bosom friends. All the vicissitudes of my life were entrusted to her prudence, and I discovered, even before herself, the unchangeable constancy of that attachment which subsisted between my friend and the noble brother of sir Charles Fitzroy. Fearing for the happiness of my dear Mary, I strove to caution her against giving any encouragement to his addresses; but true love will not be controlled, either by the suggestions of friendship or of interest, and I ceased to advise, when I found that her heart was irrevocably bestowed on your father. He also honoured me by his esteem and confidence, and I was well acquainted with his fixed determination of marrying your mother, as soon as he returned to England. The letter which lady Sarah wrote to your grandfather wounded him deeply. He was a man of strict honour, of unsullied character. The supposition that he was

accessary to the intended union of his child with the son of his patron, stung him to the quick, and he resolved instantly to remove her out of the knowledge of young Fitzroy.

"The evening before this took place, my friend spent with me. She had just completed her nineteenth year, and might have vied with any of lady Sarah's noble relations for beauty of feature and elegance of form. The displeasure of her father, which she had never before experienced, sat heavy on her mind. Her journey, and consequent separation from her family and myself, called forth the tear of unfeigned regret from us both. It was then that I once more ventured gently to remonstrate against her nourishing in her bosom a passion which only promised to overwhelm her in misery. 'What comfort, my beloved Mary,' said I, 'can you expect in marrying George Fitzroy? His relations will never receive or acknowledge you; his profession will divide you,

and thus you will be deprived of the society of him for whose sake you have voluntarily sacrificed so much."

Miss Fitzroy turned pale; a deathlike faintness came over her; but Mrs. Byron perceived it not; she continued, "My friend shook her head. 'Alas!' she cried, 'I own the justice of your remark; I lament the vexation I have occasioned my dear parents; I would fain be all they wish, all they expect. I will not attempt to inform George of the place where my father means to conceal me; but if he should discover it, if he should see me, if he should urge his tenderness, and remind me of my own, I feel that I shall not have courage to resist his eloquence, or refuse my hand to one who has so long possessed my heart."

"Oh, my poor mother!" exclaimed Mary, in a tone of filial respect, mingled with pity.

"The next day," said Mrs. Byron, "Mr. Seymour conveyed his daughter to

London, and placed her, as he vainly imagined, in a secure retreat; but the active vigilance of her lover discovered her abode, and his eloquence too well succeeded in seducing her from her duty. They were married, and I then, for the first time since her departure, received a letter, which contained the intelligence of her disobedience, and which implored my interest in her favour. You are too well informed, my dear girl, of the inflexibility of Mr. Seymour, and of the illiberal conduct of lady Sarah and her husband. The loss of my beloved friend affected me deeply; and the death of my mother, which happened two years afterwards, occasioned me to quit that part of the country. A variety of circumstances prevented my ever being able to see the children of one to whom I was so strongly attached, until chance conducted me to the house of the tradesman where I was so happy as to discover her daughter."

Mary embraced the valuable friend of her deceased mother, and expressed her

hopes that no accident would ever occur to separate them.

"Such is my wish also," replied Mrs. Byron; "and should Monteith take the cottage I have mentioned, I shall then be enabled to see you daily. But we will now retire for the night. A little rest, my love, is necessary to compose the flutter of your spirits, after what has been agreed on to-day."

Mary could not, however, tranquillize her mind so soon as Mrs. Byron expected. Her heart beat violently as she recalled that part of the conversation of Monteith which related to her early friend. More than two years had elapsed since their meeting, yet he still remembered her, and even wished for an opportunity to renew the intimacy. How flattering such a wish to the vanity of a young heart, still warmly grateful for the generous friendship the noble stranger had evinced! Mary could not conceal from herself the pleasure she felt at finding that she was not forgotten, or the very natural desire of once more beholding a

man who had endeavoured, in the short space of a week, to promote, as much as possible, her welfare and happiness. "And yet," said she, sighing deeply as she spoke, "were I once more to see him, how should I excuse myself for having so ill profited by his counsels? Have I not this day given a proof of how little my heart was affected, either by his love or his eloquence, since I have consented clandestinely to become the wife of Monteith—to brave the resentment of his family—to do *that* which I refused two years ago, though rank and fortune were then at my option? Ah! it is now that I feel the force of those emotions which then agitated my early friend! —it is now that I feel the strength of that passion which impels me to devote myself to the idolized, the mysterious Monteith! Yet, in thus hastily disposing of myself, I commit not the sin of disobedience; I fly not from the arms of a tender mother, an indulgent father. An orphan, neglected and unhappy, I only quit a home long become painful, to enter one

chosen by the man who willingly espoused my cause, and who generously determines to give up all his connexions for my sake, and to live but for me. The retirement to which I shall be consigned will be delightful to me; I shall enjoy uninterrupted the conversation and the lessons of Monteith—I shall have leisure to gaze on every feature of his handsome face—to listen attentively to the enchanting tones of his voice—and to study how to render myself yet more captivating in his eyes."

Mary paused: her own filled with tears. "I shall be happy! oh, how happy! As the wife of Monteith, not a care can disturb my breast! Cruel tears! why do you come to sully the rapture of the present blissful prospect—to dash the imaginary cup of felicity from my lips, before I have even tasted of its sweets? Heaven knows with what enthusiasm I love him—with what extacy I consent to contribute to his happiness—with what cheerfulness I subscribe to the strange conditions he has imposed on me! Why then these tears,

which seem to be an omen of some hidden evil? For his sake, I can endure much—nay, every thing, but the loss of his affection, of himself!"

Mary now dried her tears, then knelt to offer up her prayers to Him whose mercy is extended even to the meanest of his creatures, and whose power no one is able to withstand. After this duty was performed, her mind felt more composed, and she retired to rest, hoping, that as she was guilty of no breach of filial trust or moral rectitude, her union would prove a happy one; and that whatever were the private vexations of Monteith, they would soon be removed; resolving at the same time, that her tender attention to all that could give him pleasure should at least lighten their weight.

The next morning, however, betrayed to the friend of Miss Fitzroy her want of sleep the preceding night; yet she forbore to notice the paleness of her cheek, lest it should remind her of what had occasioned

it. Monteith soon joined them, and Mary's spirits were no longer depressed. She saw his fine eyes beaming with affection for herself—felt the gentle pressure of his hand as he addressed her, and no thought inimical to her repose obtruded itself on her mind.

"I should have been with you before this, my dear Mary," said he, "but as I crossed the park, I was met by Clinton, who kept me nearly half an hour in conversation about the Scorpions. He and his mother accompanied them last night to the theatre, and though he paid great attention to Arabella, he could not gain from her any intelligence respecting the place of your abode. Mrs. Scorpion, I find, persists in her folly of marrying me to her daughter, and actually intimated an intention of speaking to me very shortly on the subject. I shall, however, take the liberty to cut the connexion as soon as possible."

"I would have you call there to-morrow," replied Mrs. Byron, "lest your ab-

sence should occasion us a visit from Mrs. Scorpion—a favour we are by no means anxious to receive; but, as we are never sure of her, I think Mary had better remain at home, while you and I go and look at the cottage."

To this Monteith, who was unwilling to be separated a moment from Mary, would not consent, and they therefore proceeded together to the inspection of the house proposed to them by Mrs. Byron. It was a small, but elegant little residence, tastefully fitted up, with modern furniture, in the cottage style; situated in a delightful garden, laid out so as to appear much larger than it actually was, from the variety of its walks, which were ornamented with a profusion of flowering shrubs and evergreens. The whole appearance of this charming retreat, completely shut in from the gaze of impertinent curiosity, was such as to meet with the approbation of Monteith, who, turning to Mary, and pressing her hand with trembling tenderness, inquired, in a low voice, if she thought

she could be contented to live with him in so retired a spot?

Mary timidly assented. To her it seemed like fairy-land; and as she leaned on the arm of him she adored, she felt that his presence had power to dispense charms on the most desolate scene—to render any place a heaven.

Monteith so highly approved of the cottage, that he immediately agreed to take it for a twelvemonth certain, and was going to give the person to whom it belonged a reference, when he was prevented by the man saying, "Your appearance, sir, is perfectly sufficient; that, and my knowledge of Mrs. Byron's character, renders any reference unnecessary. My last tenant was captain and Mrs. Dutton; a most amiable couple they were indeed. They would not have left me, but the gentleman was ordered abroad, and she, poor lady, went to live with her mother. I hope, sir, that you and your lady will be more fortunate."

Monteith's heart throbbed; he cast a

glance on his blushing companion, and saw through her veil the deep crimson on her cheek. How at that moment did he wish that no eye, save that of Heaven, could witness his transports!

On their return, Mrs. Byron sent them into the drawing-room, lest Mrs. Scorpion should call, and reminded Mary that she had not remembered to play even a single air to Monteith since his discovering her abode. Mary would have sat down immediately to the instrument, but her lover, smiling at her readiness to obey, said, "Not now, my sweetest Mary; I flatter myself we shall soon have sufficient leisure to devote to my favourite science; but at present, I wish to talk to you on the subject of our future establishment;" then leading her to a chair, he placed himself on a part of it, and taking off her veil and bonnet, folded her in his arms in speechless tenderness.

"My lovely Mary!" at length he exclaimed, "you have already been taken for my wife; what rapture I felt at the

idea!—I could have hugged the fellow for his agreeable suggestion. Tell me, my love, are you perfectly satisfied with our future residence? *Our* residence, my Mary! it will be *our* home, and we shall inhabit the same house, the same room." His eyes, melting with the rapture of his heart, encountered those of his timid companion, who raised his hand to her lips, then deeply blushing at the freedom of the action, hid her face on his shoulder.

"Angelic Mary!" said Monteith, pressing her still closer to his breast, yet with a delicacy which inspired her with courage, "in a few days the holy rites of the church will make you mine. In the house of God will I plight to you my vows; not in a drawing-room, appropriated to mirth and levity, will I receive the hand of my adored Mary." He paused, as if oppressed by some painful recollections. Mary raised her head; her look recalled his wandering senses. "My beloved!" he continued, "I feel assured of my undivided empire over thy soul, assured of thy ready obe-

dience to all my wishes. It shall be the study of my life to promote thy felicity; but if at any moment you perceive the gloom of discontent cloud my brow, seek not to inquire the cause, only believe, that while I have power to think, to breathe, my affection for yourself will remain inviolate. Now tell me, my Mary, how would you wish to pass the day of our nuptials? Shall we, immediately after the ceremony, go out of town, or shall we retire to the cottage, and take possession of it the same day?"

"I have no choice indeed," replied Mary, embarrassed. "Consult with our dear Mrs. Byron; I will agree to whatever she proposes."

"What am I now to be consulted upon?" cried her steady friend, as she entered the drawing-room.

"About the manner in which we shall spend our wedding-day, my dear madam," said Monteith, gaily. "Give me your opinion. Shall we eat our chickens at the cottage, or shall we dine a short distance

from town? Mary leaves it to our option."

"Well, then," replied Mrs. Byron, "I vote for the latter. Mary has never yet seen Hampton Court, and its celebrated pictures. Suppose we spend the day in looking them over, and in rambling through the gardens and the wilderness."

"With all my heart," cried Monteith. "What says my beloved Mary, my affianced bride?"

"I should like it very much," replied Mary, in a low voice, "only I fear that it would be known." She hesitated.

"No, my dear girl," said Mrs. Byron, comprehending instantly the meaning of her fears; "I will manage that affair. You know the brother of my maid keeps a livery-stable at Knightsbridge; he is a steady, married man, and to oblige me, will, I know, drive his own horses. He shall wait at the end of the lane on Tuesday morning; we can go out the back way, unperceived by any one. Monteith can meet us at the church; and as soon as the cere-

mony is over, we can set off for Hampton. I know I can depend on his silence."

Mary was greatly relieved by this assurance, and felt not a little pleased when Mrs. Byron proposed to give up to her the servant she had just mentioned, and who had lived with her five years, during which time she had discovered her to be a trustworthy and faithful domestic. Mary could not avoid expressing her gratitude at this fresh instance of Mrs. Byron's kindness; yet felt a reluctance to rob her of the services of a person to whom she was so justly attached.

"I can spare her to you, my dear Mary," replied her worthy friend, "convinced that you will find in her a treasure. You are at present a novice in housekeeping, and Betty is a careful, good manager. She will serve you with fidelity and respectful affection; and I shall be more satisfied at knowing that you have so valuable a woman about your person.—Now tell me, my dear Monteith, how do you mean to manage with respect to Mrs.

Scorpion? What excuse can I make, should she call on me and find her adopted daughter absent?"

"I hardly know," replied Monteith, "what will be the best in this affair. It will be impossible to conceal our marriage for any length of time; but how to break it to her, remains yet to be decided. I will call there to-morrow, lest my absence should offend her, and, for the present, I do not wish to draw down either upon Mary or myself her fury. Do you think, my dearest love, that you will have courage to encounter her reproaches and her anger?"

"So little do I feel indebted to her for any act of kindness," replied Mary, with spirit, "that I shall not fear her displeasure, conscious that she will no longer possess the power to separate me from you."

A loud knocking at the door put an end to this conversation, and Betty, almost breathless with fear, ran up stairs to give notice that it was Mrs. Scorpion and her daughter.

"Shew them into the parlour," said her mistress; "they will not stay long. Will you remain here, Monteith, while Mary and I go and face the enemy? Or, if you like best, you may just step into the back parlour, where you will overhear all our conversation."

Monteith made choice of the latter, and they accordingly descended to meet their unwelcome visitors.

Mrs. Scorpion, after the usual salutations were over, said, "The air of Brompton seems to agree amazingly with Mary; I never saw her look so well. Dear Mrs. Byron! I am under infinite obligations to you for your goodness in taking such care of her. I hope she has not been very troublesome?"

"On the contrary," replied Mrs. Byron, "she has become so dear to me, that I shall suffer a serious loss whenever I am obliged to lose her."

"Well, now, that is kind of you indeed!" said Mrs. Scorpion; "but you are the best creature in the world, and I long

to have you once more at my parties. A few weeks will, I dare say, bring about all I wish—you understand me, my dear friend, though perhaps it may be better that you and I should leave the two girls together, as I wish to consult you about something which concerns the welfare of Mary."

Mrs. Byron now rose, and led the way to the drawing-room, not a little curious to learn what Mrs. Scorpion had in view for her favourite.

Arabella, meanwhile, inquired, with seeming kindness, if Mary had not repented of her obstinacy, and if she did not wish to return home? "I miss you," said she, "notwithstanding our different way of thinking; and I am certain, that if you were to ask mamma, she would forgive you, and take you back, especially if you would agree to receive young Clinton as your intended husband."

"You are very good to be thus interested in my return, Arabella," replied Miss Fitzroy; "but I am so contented

here, so perfectly happy in the enlightened society of Mrs. Byron, that I feel no inclination to quit it. Let me again repeat, that, had I committed any fault, I would most willingly confess it; but you know that I could not help captain Monteith meeting me on the stairs. I hope, however, that it has not in any way disturbed *your* tranquillity?"

"No," replied Arabella; "I must confess, now that my mother is not present to hear me, that I always thought her removing you quite unnecessary. I wish you were come back; but she tells me that I am very foolish, and that she has acted for the best."

"I think so indeed," said Mary, smiling; "but pray, Arabella, when do you expect this marriage of yours to take place?"

"I cannot tell," replied Miss Scorpion. "When we last saw captain Monteith, he talked of going to Scotland. Mamma proposed our meeting him on the road with the Clintons; but he seemed to decline it. She now means to speak more

openly to him the next time he calls, and then, perhaps, our wishes may be realized, by my becoming Mrs. Monteith."

"Come, come, Arabella," said Miss Fitzroy, "deal candidly with me in this affair. You need not fear my betraying you. Are you really attached to captain Monteith? or, were you permitted to make your choice, would you not prefer young Clinton?"

"What consequence is it, Mary, for you to know how I should act? You are confident that I have never once dared to oppose my mother's commands. She *wills* it that I should marry captain Monteith, and I shall obey her."

"But, Arabella, answer my question. You know not the satisfaction I shall receive in hearing that you have not forgotten your old friend, and that you would not die of grief were you certain never to become the wife of captain Monteith. Come, dear Arabella, do now, to please me, speak the truth?"

"There is no resisting you, Mary, when

you are good-natured; but my mother would never forgive me if she heard of it."

"Trust to me, Arabella."

"Well, then," said Miss Scorpion, lowering her voice to nearly a whisper, "although I think captain Monteith the handsomest man I have ever seen, and the most accomplished, yet I should prefer having Clinton for a husband; but my mother will never consent to such a thing, I am positive."

"Thank you, Arabella, for this confession; in return, be assured that I will never give my hand to Mr. Clinton. You have made me more easy than you can imagine; for though circumstances have made us act too often different to our real inclinations, yet believe me, Arabella, that I would not willingly be your rival, or occasion you any serious uneasiness."

"I do believe it; but hush! I hear my mother's voice."

Mrs. Scorpion and Mrs. Byron now entered. The former told Mary that she was quite pleased with the good character

she had heard of her, and inquired if there was any thing she wished to have sent her? Upon Mary's replying in the negative, she took her leave, saying that Mrs. Byron would inform her of something, which, if she consented to, would for ever ensure her regard, and make her forget all the trouble she had caused her.

They were no sooner gone than Monteith joined them, eager to become acquainted with the new speculation of Mrs. Scorpion.

"Ah!" said Mrs. Byron, smiling to see the curiosity visible on both their countenances, "how little did my *very dear friend* imagine that my house concealed the cause of all her care, and that Monteith himself was so near as to overhear a part of her conversation!"

"But what, my dear Mrs. Byron, was the subject of that which took place in the drawing-room?"

"No less a subject than the marriage of Mary with Mr. Clinton," replied Mrs. Byron. "It seems that Mrs. Scorpion now

considers it most prudent to settle her in life as soon as possible. She has taken this new whim into her head, and appears bent on having it gratified. By this, I conjecture that she still suspects you have a lurking regard for my young friend, as she now means to confide to Mr. Clinton the place of Mary's abode, and to hurry on the match with all possible expedition; she also intends to tax you with having won the heart of her daughter, and so oblige you to declare yourself without any further delay. I however got her to promise that she would not speak to Mr. Clinton until she hears from me."

"Ridiculous woman!" exclaimed Monteith. "Why will she compel me to affront her, or place her daughter in a situation which every girl of delicacy must shrink from? The attachment which Clinton has nourished for my lovely Mary is not, I hope, so deeply rooted as to affect his future peace; he is a sensible, good-natured young man; and I think I cannot

do better than to confide to him my marriage, as soon as it has taken place. What says my dear Mary ?"

"That I have no will but yours," she replied, in a tone of fascinating sweetness. "I esteem Mr. Clinton as a friend, and sincerely hope that poor Arabella may not have entirely forfeited his good opinion, by her slavish obedience to the folly of her mother. I was so happy, Monteith, to hear her confess that her heart was not in danger of being deeply affected by the loss of your hand. It would rob me of half my joys to know that my bliss was purchased at the expence of another."

Monteith pressed her to his bosom. She felt his heart palpitate against her own. She ventured to raise her eyes to his; they were not as animated as usual, neither was the glow upon his cheek as vivid. An involuntary sigh escaped her, yet it was soon forgotten, as she listened to the melodious accents of his voice, and saw his countenance recover its wonted cheerfulness.

CHAPTER III.

As the time drew nigh which was to put Monteith in possession of his heart's dearest treasure, Mrs. Byron perceived, with friendly anxiety, that his features were occasionally clouded by melancholy, and that his mind often appeared to be wandering from the object he adored. The chief part of each day he spent with her and Mary. He seemed to live only in her presence; yet she had caught him sighing deeply, and once had seen the tear start into his eyes as he hung over her, while she was playing one of his native melodies. Strange as this seemed, Mrs. Byron's friendship readily sought an excuse for his conduct, attributing it to some disagreeable recollections, which were most likely connected with his absent family.

She had also another cause of surprise, in his evident dislike to forming any acquaintance with the Hills. It was now that she, for the first time, learnt his intention to live perfectly secluded; but, on her representing to him what sort of beings they were, and how pleasant it might be for Mary to associate occasionally with persons so modest and unassuming, he at length consented to accompany her and Miss Fitzroy to pay them a visit. His reception, and, above all, the friendly and affectionate manners of this amiable family towards his beloved Mary, altered the resolution of Monteith; and he even proposed, that, if agreeable to his affianced wife, she should make a confidant of the eldest Miss Hill, who was her favourite, and invite her to become her bride-maid. To this Mary joyfully assented; and Mrs. Byron, much gratified by this permission, took upon herself to manage the affair with the old people. They had conceived so great a respect for Mrs. Byron, and so sincere a regard for her young friend, that it

gave them no small pleasure to be informed that they were likely to enjoy her society as a neighbour, when they had always regretted the probability of losing her. It was sufficient that Mrs. Byron spoke warmly in favour of Monteith, and that *she* sanctioned his addresses. All their prudent scruples were overcome, and it was agreed that Mildred should sleep at Mrs. Byron's on the Monday night, to be in readiness for Tuesday.

Monteith had presented Mary with several valuable trinkets, preparatory to her marriage. She smilingly inquired of what use they would be to her, who was destined to lead a life of retirement?

"True," replied Monteith; "but I would have you always pay the same attention to your dress, my Mary, as if you were going to receive company. These ornaments are not wanting to heighten your attractions, but it will give me pleasure to see you wear them for my sake; and though we shall entertain no visitors, yet I shall expect, my love, that at the

dinner-hour you will evince as much eagerness to receive my opinion of your appearance, as if our table was to be crowded with guests."

"It shall be my study," replied Mary, "to ensure your approbation in every thing."

"Dearest girl!" exclaimed Monteith, taking from his pocket a small morocco case, "I have brought you a little present, which I have the vanity to think you will set more value upon than any I have yet given you."

Mary opened it, and beheld a correct likeness of himself, painted by one of the first artists. The glow of unexpected pleasure tinged her cheek, and her eyes sparkled with delight. "Precious gift!" she exclaimed, with all her natural enthusiasm of character; "never, oh, never, while I exist, will we be separated! Dearest Monteith! how shall I thank you for this inestimable treasure?"

Monteith drew her towards him—"Let me now receive, for the first time, the rich

reward of one kiss from thee, my Mary; I ask no more, until you feel sanctioned to bestow freely those heavenly pledges of affection."

Mary turned to him her blushing face.

"No, Mary," said Monteith, trembling with tenderness, "it is from your lips that I must receive my reward."

Love conquered shame, and Monteith felt the soft lips of his beloved press his forehead. Straining her passionately to his bosom, he for some moments forgot that the world contained any other being than herself. Recovering from his delirium of happiness, he said, "I had it painted that size, my Mary, in order that you might, if you pleased, always wear it next your heart. After Tuesday, you shall sit to Mr. ——; I am anxious to give him so fair an opportunity for a trial of his skill."

Mary drew from her bosom a small gold locket, suspended to a black ribbon, saying, as she untied it, "To no one but yourself should the hair of my dear brother give place. I have worn it constantly since I last

saw him. Oh how I long to introduce you to him! He is one of the most generous of men, the most affectionate of brothers!"

Monteith passed the ribbon through the setting of the miniature, then tied it round the fair neck of his betrothed. "Let no hand but mine, dearest Mary," he cried, "remove this image from your bosom. Remember that the soul of the original is yours, and yours alone—that we live but for each other—and that the praise or censure of the world is alike indifferent to us."

Mary's heart beat in unison with the sentiments of her lover in every thing but this last avowal. The keen sense she had of neglect, the nervous dread lest she should draw on herself the ill opinion of any one, made her ever solicitous to secure esteem; and, when obtained, she repaid it with the most lively gratitude. To Mrs. Scorpion alone she behaved with occasional *hauteur*; yet a kind word or look from her adopted mother had always the

effect of softening the heart of Mary. To Arabella she was obliging and affectionate, although she was by no means an object calculated to call forth the romantic friendship of a mind like that of Miss Fitzroy.

The noble generosity of this neglected orphan would have led her to hesitate in becoming the wife of her adored Monteith, had she believed that the companion of her infancy was seriously attached to him; but Mary knew the blind submission of Arabella, and that Mr. Clinton was the object of her affection, long before she had seen Monteith. She nevertheless heard the recent confession of Miss Scorpion with joy, as she had once began to fear that Arabella, in allowing herself to be persuaded that she would become the wife of Monteith, might insensibly have brought herself to fancy that she was in love with him.

It was not to be wondered at that the passion which Mary felt for Donald Monteith should engross her whole soul. The

beauty of his person, the graceful dignity of his form, called forth all her admiration; but the tenderness of his voice, and eyes which betrayed to her how fervently she was beloved, excited all the gratitude of her nature, and gave birth to feelings which led her cheerfully to devote herself to his wishes. She no longer remembered the unkindness she had experienced in her childhood—she no longer sighed for the bosom of a friend, of a heart congenial with her own. In Monteith, every hope was centered; in him were united all the endearing relationship which she covetted, and which, in her opinion, made life desireable.

At length the morning arrived which was to fix for ever the future happiness of Miss Fitzroy. She had passed the night agitated and uneasy, from a succession of confused and tormenting visions, and was now awakened by the voice of Mildred Hill, who had been her companion, and who laughingly inquired if she had forgotten the importance of the day, or the

additional time which would be required to array her for the happy event? Mary rose unrefreshed; she strove to check the mysterious, the unaccountable oppression of her spirits, by replying with gaiety to the good-natured remarks of Mildred, who seemed to have cast aside her native mildness of character, and to have borrowed for the occasion some of Mary's animation.

Mrs. Byron now tapped at the door, and Mary hastened to admit her. Flinging herself into her arms, she said, "My dear, my maternal friend, let me receive your blessing!" Overpowered, she stopped, and Mrs. Byron, affectionately embracing her, replied, "May Heaven smile upon the event of this morning, my beloved Mary!—May Heaven bless you with its choicest gifts, and crown each succeeding year with increasing raptures! But be quick, my child! breakfast waits, and our dear Monteith is to be at the church before ten.—Do not forget, Mildred, to take with you a smelling-bottle."

"For what, my dear madam? You

surely do not apprehend that Miss Fitzroy will faint, when she is going to be married to the handsomest man of the age?"

Mary smiled; her spirits became lighter, and she assured Mrs. Byron that there was no occasion for a smelling-bottle; she would not pay Monteith so bad a compliment as to render such assistance necessary. Mary then proceeded to finish her dressing, and in a few minutes made her appearance in the breakfast-parlour, where, to her great surprise, she beheld Monteith ready to receive her, and judged, from the satisfaction visible on the countenance of Mrs. Byron, that it was a preconcerted thing between them.

Monteith enjoyed her amazement—"Is it not better, my love," said he, "that we should meet here than in the street? Mrs. Byron and I consulted together yesterday, and we agreed that I should take my breakfast with you." Then lowering his voice, he said, "I thought you long, my dear Mary, in descending."

"I did not expect the pleasure of see-

ing you here," she replied, "or I should have hastened my movements."

Monteith pressed her hand in silence. His eyes ran over her slender form, arrayed in her nuptial garments; and his heart throbbed with transport as he reflected that in the little space of an hour, he should become master of her fate. He was critically nice in his taste on female attire; the delicacy which Mary had ever observed in hers, gave him a high opinion of the purity of her mind, and he could not avoid expressing his satisfaction at her present appearance, which he conceived to be more lovely than usual, especially when contrasted with that of Mildred Hill, who had paid more attention to fashion than modesty.

Mary had on a dress of the finest worked India muslin, trimmed round the bottom with Vandyke lace, set on a broad white satin ribbon; the body and sleeves were composed of lace and alternate strips of needlework; a habit-shirt of lace covered her fair and beautiful bosom, over

which she threw a scarf of richly-embroidered white satin; the luxuriance of her glossy ringlets was partly hid beneath a small chip hat, ornamented with a wreath of white satin orange blossoms. The innocency of her dress could only be equalled by the innocency of her mind; and Monteith, as he gazed on her glowing countenance, felt that he had injured the beneficence of his Creator when he had dared to murmur at some of his decrees, to give way to a despair which was changed into rapture since he had gained the heart of his Mary.

Betty now came to tell them that her brother's coach was waiting at the end of the lane. Monteith took from her the veil of her future mistress, and putting into her hand a guinea, told her that he had forgotten to bring her a pair of gloves; then throwing the veil over Mary, which nearly covered her, and which was a present from himself, they hastened down the garden to the spot where the carriage stood in readiness to convey them to the church.

Notwithstanding that it drove to a little distance after it had set them down, yet several people had collected together in the churchyard, to take a peep at the happy pair as they came out; and Mary, whose face was crimsoned with blushes, did not venture to look up, as her ears were assailed with the good-natured blessings of the spectators, all of whom pronounced them to be the handsomest couple they had ever seen. Monteith, whose heart was full of extacy, flung a handful of silver among the village children as the coach drove rapidly from the sacred edifice, within whose walls he had plighted his faith to her he adored.

Mrs. Byron took a hand of each, and pressed them expressively to her lips. Words were not requisite to define her feelings; both Monteith and Mary were perfectly acquainted with her mental prayer. The latter, scarce believing the reality of what had just passed, sat lost in thought, until the friendly voice of Mildred congratulated her as Mrs. Monteith.

It was then then that the courage of Mary gave way, and she sunk almost fainting on the bosom of Monteith, whose circling arms and kiss of rapture soon recalled her fleeting senses.

"Fie, Mary!" said Mrs. Byron, laughingly; "you should have kept your word, and not have been obliged to have recourse at last to what you rejected with so much spirit."

"Had I wanted it half an hour ago," replied Mary, smiling in her turn, "the cause might have been misconceived by some; now, I believe, but one opinion can be formed of the reason of my being overcome. Mildred will easily attribute it to the excess of my happiness, on hearing myself called, for the first time, by a name so dear, so sacred to me."

Monteith with difficulty restrained his transports, and Mildred reminded her friend that Betty had put into the coach a band-box with their change of dress. She then assisted her to take off the white satin scarf, and to put on a short pelisse of

pale blue silk, with a bonnet of the same, as Mary objected to giving room for the supposition of its being her wedding-day. Mildred followed her example, and attired herself in the same colours, to the no small amusement of Mrs. Byron, who laughed to see the pains they took to conceal what gave each bosom such sincere delight.

By the time they had arrived at Hampton, and taken some refreshment, Mary recovered her spirits sufficiently to converse with ease, and to enjoy the variety of objects which surrounded her. Leaning on the arm of him now become her husband, she wandered over the stately apartments, admiring the beauty of the paintings by which they were adorned; while every now and then the tender glance which shot from the eyes of Monteith, or the gentle pressure of his hand, recalled her to a sense of her own felicity. The gardens of the palace and the wilderness next attracted their attention. The scene was as new to Mildred Hill as it was to Mary,

and Mrs. Byron felt gratified that she had devised for them so pleasing a treat.

Monteith perceiving the pleasure they experienced, proposed that they should visit the palace again shortly, and bring with them the sister of Mildred, who had been excluded from their present amusement. This met with general approbation; and after wandering about till they were tolerably fatigued, they returned to partake of an elegant dinner, which Monteith had ordered to be got ready at the Lion.

After this repast was concluded, Mrs. Byron proposed to Mildred to accompany her once more through the labyrinth, wishing to give Monteith an opportunity of enjoying for a few minutes undisturbed the company of his Mary. The latter rose to follow her. "No, no," said Mrs. Byron; "we do not want you; we shall be back in less than half an hour."

Mary reseated herself in silence, and saw them depart with bashful reluctance. Monteith poured out a glass of wine, and having first tasted it, offered it to Mary.

"Take it, my beloved wife," said he, passing his arm round her waist; "drink it to oblige me; let this be the first proof of your obedience." Mary obeyed.

Refilling the glass, Monteith said, "Adored Mary! may your bosom be always as free from care as at this moment! —may the return of this day of bliss bring with it only emotions similar to the present! and may I cease to exist rather than become an object of your indifference or reproach!"

"You are exempt from even the possibility of either," replied Mary, in a low voice. "If I know any thing of my own heart, it can never change. The whole world has not power to estrange me from my fidelity to you. One thing alone could weaken my attachment, strong as it is."

"And what is that?" inquired Monteith, in a hurried manner.

"A change in yourself. You must first cease to love me, before my tenderness can diminish."

"Then I am safe," replied Monteith,

snatching her to his breast, and imprinting on her lips an impassioned kiss; "you are mine for ever, since *my* love can know no alteration. Oh Mary!" he continued, "ours is the union of souls. Neither interest nor artifice brings us together. Love the purest, the most sanctified, has joined our hands, and surely the God of justice and of mercy will ratify the deed." He paused for a moment; his head rested on her shoulder. She saw the bright crimson of happiness recede from his cheek; she fancied also that she saw a tear dim the lustre of his eye; and turning on him her own, melting with the chastened tenderness of a bride, she pressed her lips to his —"Beloved, adored Monteith! husband of my choice! dearest object of my unvaried affection! you have this day made me the happiest of my sex. Oh, if there exists a secret cause of sorrow which I am not permitted to share, yet let me hope that my faithful love will soften its poignancy, and that for my sake you will endeavour to forget every thing which can

give you a moment's pain. I live but to promote your happiness; I have devoted myself to your repose."

Monteith again pressed his lips to hers. "Ingrate that I am!" said he, "to allow one thought inimical to my peace to disturb the rapture of to-day. I believe your professions, my lovely Mary! may they, however, never be put to the test! While I possess your heart and yourself, I can never complain of my destiny."

The return of Mrs. Byron and Mildred put an end to their conversation, and gave them an opportunity to recover their composure. Mary felt more and more convinced that it must be some serious cause of discontent which occasioned the frequent changes in the features of Monteith; yet she confined her suspicions to her own breast, nourishing the hope that her tenderness might remove what was the only bar to her enjoying perfect felicity.

The close of the evening reminded Monteith that it was time to return, and they quitted Hampton highly delighted

with their little excursion. Mildred was set down at her father's house, while Mrs. Byron, Mary, and Monteith, proceeded to the cottage, where Betty had got every thing in readiness to receive them.

CHAPTER IV.

A few days after the celebration of Mary's nuptials, Monteith, by the advice of Mrs. Byron, paid a visit to Mrs. Scorpion. In the drawing-room he found that lady and her daughter, with Mr. Clinton and his mother. He had no sooner made his *entrée* than Mrs. Scorpion declared that she was just talking of him; she wished above all things to speak to him, but that he had lately become quite a stranger to her. Monteith replied, that his time had been so much occupied, that this was the first morning he had been at liberty to call.

"Well then," said she, "I must not let

the present opportunity escape.—Arabella, my love, do your best to entertain our friends while I am absent." Saying this, she rose, and conducted Monteith into the dining-parlour. Throwing herself into a chair, she motioned for him to take one next her—"Ah, my dear captain Monteith! you know not the pain I and my poor child have suffered for these last ten days; we feared lest you had quitted town without seeing us, or, what was more, lest you had been offended at some part of our conduct. Arabella has fretted herself ill on your account."

"I am sorry," replied Monteith, "that I should have caused either you or Miss Scorpion a moment's uneasiness; but business of importance detained me from paying my respects here as usual."

"Oh, you are so kind, so considerate. I told my dear Arabella that I knew you to be a man of strict honour, and that she had no reason to dread for an instant your having deserted her."

"Deserted Miss Scorpion, my dear

madam! I am at a loss to comprehend your meaning."

"Nay, my dear captain, do not affect ignorance of my meaning. I assure you I am not averse to your passion, and will give you the hand of my daughter any day you choose, with a considerable addition to her reputed fortune."

"You do me infinite honour, madam," said Monteith, gravely; "and I hope you will not deem me ungrateful, if I decline the happiness you have so liberally offered to me."

"Decline the hand of Arabella Scorpion! Impossible! You surely cannot be serious! What, captain, after paying your addresses to her so publicly—after giving all our friends room to suppose you intended to make her your wife, do you now cruelly and barbarously determine to abandon her to all the miseries of a broken heart? Oh, I could not suppose you were so inhuman," she continued, bursting into tears, "first to gain the affections of my daughter, then leave her."

"My dear madam, pray moderate your grief. You surely do me great injustice, if you have construed the politeness with which I have ever treated Miss Scorpion into any such intention. The good sense of that young lady will, I am convinced, acquit me of any other wishes than those sanctioned by friendship."

"Oh! you have ruined our peace, our happiness for ever!" said Mrs. Scorpion, sobbing violently. "Little did I imagine that I was nourishing a viper to sting the breast of my dear Arabella." Then turning towards him her face, red with passion and mortified hope, "Tell me, captain, what objection have you to my daughter?—What fault can you find in her person or manners? I should have thought that you would have gloried in becoming my son-in-law, and have thought yourself fortunate in gaining for a wife a woman so accomplished and handsome."

Monteith gazed with surprise on the odd figure before him. The thick coat

coat of carmine which she had put on her cheeks was now washed off by her tears, and only remained in streaks on her face; her flaxen wig had also suffered by her agitation; yet, ludicrous as she now appeared, Monteith did not conceive her to be an object of mirth. He offered to take her hand, but she snatched it from him disdainfully.

"No tricks, captain! no more deceiving! Either marry my daughter, or prepare to be branded with every epithet of reproach and scorn."

"It is not in my power to comply with your wishes," he replied. "Sensible as I am of Miss Scorpion's *innumerable* attractions, yet, being already married, I cannot offer her my hand."

"Married!" repeated Mrs. Scorpion, starting from her seat, "married! then all hopes are lost, and my poor dear child will die of grief! Oh, captain, captain! it was base of you not to tell me this before!"

Monteith rose. — "Such intelligence would have been premature, madam, as I

only became a husband a few days back. I will now take my leave. When you are cool enough to review the whole of my past conduct, you will not accuse me of having trifled with the peace of Miss Scorpion."

"Well," cried Mrs. Scorpion, with the malignity of a little mind, "it is however some consolation to know, that if Arabella cannot become your wife, she has not been outrivalled by Mary Fitzroy. I will endeavour, captain Monteith, to forget the terrible disappointment you have occasioned me; and if my daughter can forget it also, our friendship need not be broken. I shall trust to your honour not to make public what has passed between us."

Monteith, who did not wish for a repetition of her angry invectives, now took his leave, postponing until a future opportunity his intended disclosure.

Mrs. Scorpion's deranged appearance was too visible to escape the notice of her visitors, who judged that her conference

with Monteith had not been a pleasant one. They were no sooner gone than she recounted to her daughter what had passed. Again her tears flowed, and her sobs choked her utterance. Arabella was greatly surprised at this intelligence of Monteith's marriage, but shewed no symptoms of that distraction her mother had expected.

"Heaven defend me!" cried Mrs. Scorpion, "why, Arabella, you are as tranqüil as if I had told you the day was fixed for your nuptials! Well, it is amazing that you should be so calm, when I was ready to die when I heard of it."

"My dearest mother, what is the use of grieving for what cannot be remedied? There are more men in the world than captain Monteith. *You* said he was in love with me, and I therefore believed it, though I confess I never had any reason to think so myself. He never addressed me as a lover; and if I had married him, it would have been in obedience to your commands, not, as Mary would say, from the dictates of my own heart."

"Heavens, Arabella! you are unlike what I once was. When I was your age, the company of such a man as captain Monteith would have set me all in a flutter, and the loss of him would have driven me to madness. I verily believe that at this moment *I* suffer more than *you*."

"Do not afflict yourself, my dear mother, on my account; I shall bear my disappointment with all possible fortitude; but may I not beg to have Mary return to us, though I hope that you will not now insist on her giving her hand to young Clinton?"

"Oh, how it revives my drooping spirits," exclaimed Mrs. Scorpion, "to know that Miss Mary's hopes will be at an end! Yes, Arabella, we will go this very day to Brompton, to tell her that her idol is married; and since you have lost one lover, Arabella, you have my permission to secure another. Mary must give up all thoughts of Clinton; he shall be your beau until we can get a better."

"Alas!" replied her daughter, sighing,

"I am not so certain that he will condescend to notice me, after what has passed."

"Stuff and nonsense!" said her mother, angrily; "I'll engage that he will be glad enough to notice you, when I shall make known to Mrs. Clinton the addition which I intended to make to your fortune, and which I shall not now choose to alter. Leave it to me and his mother; we will manage the matter, and bring about your marriage with her son before the captain's honeymoon is over. Ring, Arabella, for a coach to be sent for. I shall not rest until I have seen what effect the news of his union will have upon the delicate nerves of Miss Mary."

When Mrs. Scorpion and her daughter arrived at Brompton, Mrs. Byron was gone to dine with Monteith and his lovely bride. She had, however, left instructions with her servant, who hastened to inform her mistress of her unwelcome visitors.

"How shall I act, my dear friend?" said she. "Shall I disclose your marriage, or endeavour to allay the disappointed fury

of Mrs. Scorpion, which may be increased by the absence of Mary ?"

"Act as you think proper, my dear mother," replied Monteith, "only prevent her coming here. I would not have the tranquillity of my little dwelling disturbed, or my beloved wife made uneasy by her presence, though but for an hour."

"Well, I will see what I can do for you," said Mrs. Byron, smilingly. "My task, I assure you, will not be a pleasing one. I must fortify myself to encounter her severest reproaches." Saying this, she quitted them, and proceeded to her own house.

The moment she entered the parlour, where Mrs. Scorpion and her daughter were seated, the former rose, and catching her hand, exclaimed, in a voice which betrayed her inward vexation, "My dear, dear Mrs. Byron! I am come on purpose to tell you the most cruel piece of treachery and deception! I am sure you will sympathize in the feelings of a mother, and join with me in lamenting that I have been so completely duped by appearances.

But where is Mary? I wish her to be present at the disclosure."

"I have left her with a very dear friend of mine," replied Mrs. Byron. "But what has so dreadfully disturbed you, Mrs. Scorpion?"

"Oh! I am sure you will hardly believe it possible when I tell you. He looked so good, so amiable! I thought him incapable of doing a bad action; and after all my kindnesses, all my pointed attentions, to desert her for another—it was most barbarous!" Here her tears prevented her going on. At length, however, recovering herself, she continued, "You know, my dear Mrs. Byron, how much I loved and respected captain Monteith, and that I fully expected to have had him for a son-in-law?"

"I know that such were your wishes," replied Mrs. Byron; "but I confess that I always suspected that you were misleading your daughter, as well as yourself."

"Ah, my dear friend, you had more penetration than I have," said Mrs. Scor-

pion, sighing bitterly. "You, very probably, heard that he was attached elsewhere—nay, may have heard that he has actually blasted all my fond expectations, and married, I dare say, some woman for her money, while at heart he may still prefer my dearest Arabella."

"That fatal idea has caused all your present distress," replied Mrs. Byron. "You may rely upon my word, for I had it from the best authority, that captain Monteith married for love alone, since the lady whom he has chosen as a partner for life has little else to boast of, except her personal and mental accomplishments."

"You know her then?" inquired Mrs. Scorpion, with a stare of surprise. "You are acquainted with the person who has supplanted my Arabella?"

"Perfectly well. She is as dear to me as my existence, and deserves the happiness which, I trust, will be her lot. But let me beg you, Mrs. Scorpion, to be undeceived. Captain Monteith, however he

might esteem your daughter, and feel grateful for the kindness he met with from yourself, never for a moment entertained the slightest intention of gaining any thing beyond her friendship. The lady he has married has possessed his most passionate adoration ever since he knew her; and I rejoice to see that Miss Scorpion's good sense prevents her from repining at an event, which, I hope, has not deeply affected her repose."

"You amaze me," cried Mrs. Scorpion, "by your knowledge of what has passed! Pray does Mary take it very calmly? I rather think that *she* will fret more than my Arabella, for I know that she was very fond of him."

"I have never seen her so happy as since his marriage," said Mrs. Byron; "she is all life and spirits, and looks even more lovely than usual."

"Astonishing!" exclaimed Mrs. Scorpion. "This is more wonderful than any thing; but I can only account for it from her contradictory nature. She rejoices at

the disappointment *we feel*; she knows how deeply *I* should suffer from such a circumstance, and she therefore forgets her own mortification to gladden on mine."

"Indeed, mamma," said Arabella, who now spoke for the first time, "I do not believe any such a thing; I never saw Mary pleased at the vexation of another."

"You do her but justice, my dear Miss Scorpion," cried Mrs. Byron, gratified by this shew of good-nature towards one to whom she was so strongly attached. "Mary has a heart and mind superior to every unworthy passion. She was convinced that your affections were otherwise disposed of, or she would not have acted as she has done."

"This is a strange affair altogether," said Mrs. Scorpion, who felt herself much discomposed by the coolness of Mrs. Byron, and still more so by the warmth she displayed in defending the amiable orphan.

"And yet," replied the friend of the latter, "there is nothing very singular,

Mrs. Scorpion, in captain Monteith marrying the woman he adores."

"As things have turned out," said Mrs. Scorpion, "so unfavourable to my hopes, I will no longer trouble you with Mary. If you will be so good as to send for her, she can return with us this evening."

"Nay, nay," replied Mrs. Byron; "do not be in so great a hurry to rob me of my charming companion. Since she has been with me, I have looked upon her as my child; I have cherished her as the offspring of my dearest friend; and I hope I have done a mother's part in every respect. I have consulted her happiness, and, I flatter myself, have been instrumental in securing it on a foundation the most permanent."

"You are extremely obliging, and I am greatly indebted to you, Mrs. Byron, for receiving Miss Fitzroy at a time when I wished to remove her from my house; but now I will no longer encroach on your friendship. I wish her to return with me."

"I cannot promise you that she will do that," said Mrs. Byron; "for she is at present with a friend of mine, who will not easily consent to her removal."

Mrs. Scorpion's countenance exhibited signs of manifest displeasure.

"I see you are offended," continued Mrs. Byron, "and that I shall for ever forfeit your good opinion; but I have done what I considered my duty, in promoting the happiness and welfare of an orphan almost friendless, and whose real value was only unknown to those who ought to have appreciated most sacredly its worth."

"I do not understand you, madam. Miss Fitzroy is my adopted daughter, and no one is capable of judging better than myself of her *seeming worth*. Whatever connexions she may have formed unknown to me, I must beg that you will immediately make known to her my desire that she returns home directly. I had believed, Mrs. Byron, that your word was sacred, when you gave it me concerning this child; and I did not expect to

hear from you, that she had been suffered to make any acquaintance."

"When I received the orphan daughter of my deceased friend, Mrs. Fitzroy, into my house," replied Mrs. Byron, "I promised to watch over her interest, and to act by her a mother's part. I have done so, from motives of affection, of justice, and humanity. I do not wish to hurt your feelings, Mrs. Scorpion; I wish rather to spare them. Your own heart will tell you that it is not every adopted mother who fulfils that sacred character, and that prejudice and envy may so completely blind the eyes, as to render them incapable of discovering perfections, unless in one particular object. The retreat of my young friend was discovered by a person who loved her for her innocence and unprotected state, and who saw in her all those requisites, all those natural abilities, which lay dormant for want of care and cultivation. I could not in *justice* refuse this person access to my house; I could not in *justice* deny your adopted daugh-

ter the privilege of securing to herself a home, possessing every blessing, and a heart which beat steadily and honourably for herself alone. I could not allow the fear of your displeasure to be placed in the scale with Mary's future peace. Her happiness was at stake, and that of another, equally as deserving an object as herself. To gratify it depended on me; it did not interfere with the tranquillity of Miss Scorpion; it injured no one. I therefore consented to what I knew would ensure the bliss of two amiable young people; and I think, Mrs. Scorpion, that you cannot do better than to follow my example, and rejoice, rather than regret, that the niece of major Fitzroy is become as happy as her uncle's most sanguine wishes could have hoped."

Mrs. Scorpion and Arabella looked at each other; the former appeared half petrified; while the latter sat anxiously waiting for the further development of this mystery.

"I believe," said Mrs. Byron, taking

the hand of Arabella, and smiling on her good-naturedly, "that *you* will be pleased to be convinced of Mary's happiness; and that, since you have proved that your heart was not attached to captain Monteith, you will generously join with me in wishing him every blessing that the married state can afford."

"But what has he to do with Mary?" screamed Mrs. Scorpion. "Tell me the worst at once, for I am half mad with fear!"

"And why should my joining the names of Monteith and Mary together produce this terror?" said Mrs. Byron. "Should you not rather rejoice that the sweet girl, so solemnly entrusted to your care, has found a protector worthy of her? and since your own daughter's peace of mind remains uninjured, why should you be averse to Mary being settled in life before her?"

"Oh! I shall die, Arabella! give me air! I cannot breathe!"

Miss Scorpion flew to support her mo-

ther, who now fell into strong hysterics, to the no small alarm of her daughter, who, sobbing violently, assisted Mrs. Byron to use every remedy for her restoration. It was some time, however, before Mrs. Scorpion became sensible; she then wept bitterly for some minutes, which gave her relief, and she soon found once more the use of her tongue, which she employed in reproaching Mrs. Byron for the part she had acted, and in declaring, that if Mary had actually dared to become the wife of Monteith, she would never again either see or speak to the vipers who had thus cruelly and treacherously stung her to the soul. "She shall yet feel that I have some power over her," said she, malignantly; "I will not pay her one shilling of her allowance until I am compelled, which will not be until she is of age; and, should we ever meet, she must expect to be loaded with my just invectives for her daring presumption. Never while I live will I forgive her; and from this hour she may consider me as her decided enemy."

"Think better of it, Mrs. Scorpion; you are warm now, but when you are cool, I hope you will remember the dying charge of her uncle, and forgive an action which exonerates you from all further trouble on her account."

"No, madam, I can never forgive either you or the bane of my existence. I could have perhaps overlooked her insolence in disposing of herself without my leave, but I can never forget that she braved my utmost severity in marrying the man I intended to be the husband of Arabella. Tell her, from me, that whenever I meet her, I will insult her; and I hope, from the bottom of my soul, that she will, before two years are past, have cause to curse the day she ever presumed to outrival my daughter!" Saying this she flung out of the parlour, followed by Arabella, who wept at the passionate exclamation of her mother, and who would rather have witnessed the return than the expulsion of Mary from her mother's house.

They were no sooner gone than Mrs. Byron hastened to the abode of Monteith, who, with his Mary, listened very attentively to the narration of their maternal friend. When she had ended, he said, as he folded his wife to his bosom, "Thank Heaven, my beloved, that you are not dependant on the bounty of that mean-spirited woman! All I have is at your disposal. You shall not, my dear Mary, stand in need of a private-purse of your own; mine is yours; nor shall I ever inquire into the mode of its expenditure. Her demon-like hope, that you might regret your union with me, will, I trust, prove equally unavailing. We live but for each other; and while I am encircled in your arms, I feel that no danger can reach me! nor have I a doubt that mine will be less invulnerable."

Mary pressed her soft lips to his blooming cheek; her tender eyes met his, and in them he read the doting fondness of her heart. The world, and all its malignity, faded before his sight, and even the

remembrance of Scottish troubles were forgotten.

Two days after the visit of Mrs. Scorpion, Mrs. Byron received a letter from that lady, couched in terms of cold civility, requesting to have the address of Mrs. Monteith, as she wished to write to her. This, however, was far from the intention of Donald, who meant to keep his residence a secret from all; and she therefore returned an answer equally civil, offering to convey any message or letter to her adopted daughter, but she declined giving up the place of her abode.

Mrs. Scorpion, when she read this second mortification, was even more exasperated than before. She raved one moment, then cried like a child the next, declaring that she believed it would shorten her life by several years. Arabella did all in her power to sooth and comfort her mother, and ventured every now and then to intercede for the lovely offender; but this only added to the rage of Mrs. Scorpion, and, for the first time, she raised her hand

against her darling, and actually gave her a box on the ear, for her temerity in advocating the cause of one she now hated more strongly than ever.

Fortunately for the health of Mrs. Scorpion, and the tranquillity of her daughter, the mind of the former was diverted for awhile from its deep-rooted malignity, by a visit from Mrs. Clinton and her son. Arabella was ordered to retire, while she, with well-managed artifice, disclosed to them the desertion of Monteith, and the daring disobedience of her young charge, not failing to bestow on Mrs. Byron her full share of censure. So artfully did she appeal to the different feelings of her hearers, that even Clinton, who was thunderstruck at the discovery of Mary's marriage, felt a temporary resentment towards Monteith, for not having thought him worthy to be trusted with the secret of his attachment. This was succeeded by a good-natured sentiment of pity for Arabella, who was thus made the theme of

general talk among her acquaintance, through the mistaken vanity of her mother. He saw that she felt the disagreeableness of her situation, and he strove to render it less painful by every kind attention in his power. The beauty, the easy gracefulness of Mary, her lively, fascinating manners, her innocent freedom of conversing with him, were not forgotten by young Clinton; yet she had never encouraged his addresses, and he could not help acknowledging that Monteith was, in every respect, worthy of bearing away so rich a prize.

The generous wish to relieve the embarrassment of Arabella, and to divert her mind from the unpleasant idea of being neglected, made him a more frequent guest at the house of her mother. He volunteered to accompany her into public, and was rewarded by seeing that his attentions had the desired effect. Arabella, who was really attached to him at heart, was not a little delighted at this shew of returning

kindness in her former lover, and did all on her part to merit his good opinion, and to evince her gratitude.

Mrs. Scorpion's chagrin and mortification was now converted once more into hope and joy. She failed not to repeat several times to Mrs. Clinton the additional amount of her daughter's fortune, and to enumerate all her good qualities; while to young Clinton she behaved with pointed attention, asking his opinion and soliciting his advice on every subject on which it could be given. She proposed an excursion to the seaside for a short time, to recruit the health and spirits of Arabella, provided that he and his mother would accompany them. To this they willingly assented, and in a short time set out for Brighton, where Mrs. Scorpion soon ceased to grieve for the loss of her destined son-in-law, though in her heart she firmly detested the innocent object whom she foolishly imagined had occasioned it.

CHAPTER V.

THE indisposition of Mildred Hill had unavoidably postponed Monteith's second visit to Hampton Court; but as she was now perfectly recovered, they did not regret the delay, as it occasioned a most agreeable addition to their little party, in the presence of an amiable young man, a nephew of Mr. Hill, and his sister, who were come to town on a visit to their uncle. Their father was a man of considerable property in Bedfordshire, and these were the only children remaining out of a large family to inherit his wealth. At the pressing solicitation of his brother, he at length consented that his daugher should accompany his son to London, to pass the winter with her cousins, who, in return, were to spend part of their summer with him in Bedfordshire.

The old gentleman had yet a stronger reason for parting with his beloved Eliza; he hoped by this journey, to separate her from a dissipated and thoughtless young man, who had long paid his addresses to her, but whose character he disliked, notwithstanding that his father was a neighbour and friend, and repeatedly assured him that Ned would verify the old saying —that a reformed rake makes the best husband. Mr. Richard Hill had too great a regard for the peace of his child to give his consent to her becoming the wife of Edward Gaylove; he therefore did not oppose the wish of her brother to take her with him to London, trusting to Providence, and his daughter's duty and affection, to guard her against the designs of her lover. The Miss Hills received their cousins with every demonstration of kindness, and the old people gave them likewise a reception so warm and flattering, that the strangers soon felt themselves at home, and rejoiced at a journey which had introduced to

their notice relations so worthy to be loved.

Monteith, his Mary, and Mrs. Byron, were immediately invited to pass the day with, and to enroll on the list of their friends the names of Henry and Eliza Hill. Averse as Monteith was to extend his acquaintance, yet he could not refuse to pay a just tribute to the modest worth and pleasing manners of the country cousins. He permitted Mary to invite the whole family to the cottage, and to cultivate, if she wished it, the friendship of the amiable rustic—a permission of which she instantly availed herself, and which was accepted with transport by Eliza.

A few visits soon confirmed Mrs. Monteith in her partiality for her new acquaintance. In her she discovered all those requisites essential to form the character of the friend she had long wished for, and which, amiable as Mildred and Lydia were, they nevertheless did not possess. The hereditary mildness of their dispositions rendered them frequently insipid

companions, and the uniform tameness of their manners even made their very virtues appear constitutional. Eliza possessed all the good qualities of her cousins, joined to a mind at once enlightened and elegant. Her manners were lively, yet free from that vulgar levity which sometimes characterizes a country Miss. She was modest, animated, and handsome, while the innocency of her education and of her heart, made her a stranger to disguise; and she made no scruple of confessing to her cousins and to Mrs. Monteith the cause of the occasional pensiveness which cast a gloom over her intelligent face.

Mildred and Lydia were not unacquainted with that passion which alone had power to call forth a sigh of regret from the bosom of Eliza; but neither were capable of entering into her feelings, and of soothing them. Mildred had been attached to an officer of the army, a young man worthy of her; but her father object-

ed to his profession; and she, with an obedience which certainly reflected honour upon her conduct as a daughter, sacrificed her lover to the wishes of her parents. The young man quitted England for the Peninsula, and Mildred solaced herself for his departure in the delightful approvings of her own conscience, and the praises of those who gave her being.

Lydia was more fortunate. Her lover was the son of an eminent merchant in the City, and her marriage was only delayed until he came of age, which event would take place the ensuing summer. This arrangement did not interrupt the happiness of the young people; both were of dispositions so placid and even, that they were strangers to those alarms or anticipations of evil, which rob the more sanguine heart of half its pleasures; yet were they equally ignorant of its exquisite felicities, which arise more from imagination than from reality, and which can give a sacred charm to things in themselves insignifi-

cant, the moment they are touched by the hand of Love.

Lydia was in the habit of seeing her intended husband frequently. She knew that, at a stated period, she should become his wife, and the idea had never once entered her head that any thing might occur to prevent their union, or change the wishes of her lover. She had never asked herself the question, whether she should have acted as obediently as Mildred; though it is probable that had she been so situated, she would have been equally praiseworthy. From her cousins, therefore, Eliza could not expect to receive any sympathy, since *her* attachment was contrary to the wishes of her father; but from Mrs. Monteith she experienced the sweetest consolation and advice; in her society she almost forgot her absent admirer; and, before a month had elapsed, she had given Mary her word to imitate, as much as possible, the example of her cousin Mildred.

It was now the latter end of autumn,

when the whole party, except Mr. and Mrs. Hill, proceeded to pay their long-intended visit to Hampton Court. The weather was serene and beautiful, and Mary listened with delight to the tasteful remarks of Monteith, who pointed out to her the fine effect of an autumnal foliage, as they wandered over the park opposite the gardens of the palace. Their companions were a little before them, except Eliza, who felt too much attached to Mrs. Monteith to quit her for a moment, and who now entered with spirit into those feelings which his conversation and his refined taste gave rise to. She loved Mary with all the fondness of a sister, and she loved Monteith because he was the idol of her friend, and because he treated her with the most flattering kindness—a kindness which he actually felt, and to which she was justly entitled.

Before any one, Monteith was rather reserved in his conduct towards his wife; but before Eliza he gave way to the tenderness her presence inspired; every look,

every word, betrayed his adoration; and this amiable girl, who was about the same age as Mrs Monteith, rejoiced to be a witness of their felicity. Sometimes the idea of her absent Edward would steal across her mind; she imagined that she saw his handsome features, animated by the passion he professed, and heard his voice, dangerously soft, persuading her to listen only to his avowal. Then again she remembered his errors, to call them by no harsher name—his unbounded extravagance—his libertine principles—and his total want of thought. Was it possible that with him she should ever enjoy such happiness as was the lot of Mrs. Monteith? She feared not, and she resolved to abide by her counsels, and forget, if possible, young Gaylove; yet never had he more firmly occupied the mind of Eliza than on this day, when she saw the fine faces of Monteith and his Mary, rendered still finer by the perfect bliss which they expressed. Each thought and felt the same, on revisiting the scene sacred to them as having been

viewed before on their wedding-day. Mary looked uncommonly attractive; and the eyes of her husband did homage to her charms, and to that tenderness which increased their power.

They had witnessed every thing that was to be seen at the palace, and were returning through the wilderness to dine at the same inn as before. All had passed through the gate, except Monteith, Mary, and Eliza, who were following slowly their companions; the two ladies had their eyes fixed intently on the face of Donald, who was repeating to them some lines from a celebrated poet. On a sudden he started, and changed colour; his whole frame trembled; and Mary hastily turned her head to discover the cause. In the same walk, coming towards them, she perceived a tall, genteel man, whose temples appeared silvered by age, and whose mild and prepossessing countenance seemed calculated to disarm, rather than excite sentiments of displeasure. The stranger raised his head at their approach; he started also, and

trembled with agitation, as he pronounced the name of her husband.

Monteith gave the care of his wife to Eliza. "Go on," said he, in a low voice; "I will join you presently." She obeyed with sickening alarm, and could not avoid casting a look behind her as she passed through the gate. She saw Monteith and the stranger walking rapidly towards the most retired part of the wilderness, and her heart died within her, as she instantly connected the latter with the mysterious cause of her beloved Donald's secret uneasiness. Perhaps it was his father; yet there was not the slightest resemblance between them. Eliza saw her agitation, but did not venture to notice it. They were unconsciously going past the Lion, when Mrs. Byron, from one of the windows, called to them, and noticing the paleness of Mary, and the chilliness of her hand, compelled her to take part of a glass of wine.

Half an hour elapsed before the appearance of Monteith. He seemed in high

spirits, as he apologized for his absence; nevertheless Mary felt they were assumed; his cheek was pale, and his eye was languid, still it beamed with all its usual fondness on her, the moment Mrs. Byron informed him of her indisposition. "You have fatigued yourself, my beloved," said he, looking anxiously in her face. "Do not walk any more to-day."

"I am quite well now," she replied, "quite well."

He understood her, and tenderly pressing her hand, turned gaily to his friends, and strove to force, as much as possible, his sinking spirits. Mary watched every movement of his countenance. At dinner he scarcely tasted any thing, though he drank freely; while she, unwilling to damp the hilarity of the company, exerted herself beyond her strength to do the honours of the table.

Mrs. Byron soon discovered that all was not right. She at first dreaded lest Monteith and his wife had differed in opinion on some subject. This, indeed, was un-

likely, and she no sooner saw him return, and hasten to inquire how she was, than this idea vanished, leaving her at a loss to guess at the cause of their mutual uneasiness. Her thoughts were, however, for awhile diverted by another object. In the next room to them was a party of young men, who were rather boisterous in their merriment, and who frequently interrupted their tranquillity by the loudness of their conversation, and the breaking of the glasses. At length they were heard to quit the chamber; and Eliza, whose changeful face had been observed by Mrs. Byron, rose and went to the window; Mary followed her; she saw the young man pass into the wilderness, and was just in time to preserve her friend from falling to the ground. All were now busied in the recovery of poor Eliza; none more so than Monteith and his Mary. The latter laid her head on her bosom, and chafed her temples with lavender water, which she fortunately had with her. Eliza soon revived, and taking a hand of Mary

and of Monteith, kissed them with animating gratitude.

Mrs. Byron now proposed a walk before tea, to which they all joyfully consented, except Mary, who, remembering the wish of her husband, declined accompanying them. They were no sooner gone than she rose, and seated herself on the knee of Donald, who flung his arms affectionately round her; and placing his head on her throbbing bosom, sought to hide from her his agitation and his illness. Like herself, he had exerted himself to the utmost, and now felt the effect of overdoing his part. A tear which fell on his cheek instantly roused him. "What means this uneasiness, my adored Mary?" said he. "Are you unwell, or unhappy?"

Mary pressed her lips to his—"Neither, my dear Donald, if *you* are tranquil. But I fear you are ill. I fear you have exerted yourself too much before our friends."

"I am indisposed, I confess," he replied; "but it will soon wear off. I am anxious

also to return home, as I have letters of importance which must be written to-night."

"I wish we had not come here to-day, Donald."

"And why, dearest Mary?"

"You will be angry, perhaps, if I tell you."

"No, Mary, I hope never to have cause to be so. If you mean, however, on account of the person whom I met in the wilderness, I wish so likewise; yet the wish is a foolish one. I *must* have seen him somewhere. I have promised to breakfast with him to-morrow by nine o'clock, and I cannot break my appointment."

"Then you must go to town, I suppose?" said Mary, half fearing to offend.

"Yes, my love, but I shall return to dinner. I hope he will not think proper to watch me home to-night." Immediately recollecting himself, he said, "What could put such a ridiculous idea into my head? Do not look so serious, my belov-

ed Mary. This is one of those unpleasant circumstances which you must try to forget, and upon which I am *compelled* to be silent." He then reverted to the sudden illness of their friend Eliza. "Surely," said he, "it could only arise from her supposing that she saw Mr. Gaylove. I fear, my Mary, that all your good advice will be lost, should this really have been the case. What think you, my beloved?"

Mary, at that moment, was not thinking of Eliza; her heart and mind were full of one object alone. Monteith knew that they were, yet he continued the conversation until the entrance of the party recalled the disturbed thoughts of his wife and himself to them. They were accompanied by a young man, of pleasing appearance, whom Mr. Henry Hill begged leave to introduce as his friend Ned Gaylove, and whom the eyes of Eliza too well betrayed to be her dissipated lover.

Monteith received him with all that urbanity of manners which was natural to him, and soon discovered, that whatever were

his faults, he was gifted with a mind of no common stamp and abilities, which rendered him an accomplished and elegant companion. His conversation was at once polished and amusing, and his vivacity, tempered by sense and good-breeding, soon made his hearers forget the unpleasant character which Eliza, in the openness of her heart, had regretted that he should have possessed.

It was dark before they thought of returning. Gaylove hoped that he might be permitted to accompany them—"Will you not introduce me, Harry, to your uncle and aunt? Tell them that you and I have been schoolfellows together, and that I am extremely solicitous to pay my respects to them."

Henry smiled good-naturedly upon his lively friend, to whom he was strongly attached, and whose society possessed so many charms, that he had heard with the deepest regret the disinclination of his father to strengthening their friendship by a still closer tie. "You must promise me,

Ned," said young Hill, "to leave off all your thoughtless tricks, and turn quite sober and sedate,—What say you, Mildred? Do you think I may venture to ask Mr. Gaylove to visit *me* at my uncle's?"

Mildred cast a glance towards Eliza, who stood by the side of her lover, then at Henry, who held her own hand, waiting her reply. A something came across her mind, as she felt the pressure of his fingers; it was favourable to the lovers, and she immediately replied, "that she was sure her father would be happy to receive any of his friends." Gaylove sprang across the room, and catching the vacant hand of Mildred, respectfully kissed it, thanking her for her kind permission. Mildred blushed, and withdrew her hand.

"My friend is a giddy, good-natured, thoughtless fellow, my dear cousin," said Henry; "but he means no harm; he is no one's enemy but his own."

The carriages were now ordered to be got ready, with Mr. Gaylove's horse. Monteith no sooner heard this latter order,

than he offered him his seat in the coach, which would contain Mrs. Monteith, Eliza, and Mrs. Byron, expressing his wish to ride to town on horseback, if agreeable to Gaylove. The latter joyfully accepted the proposal; but Mary could not repress her uneasiness at this arrangement. Monteith whispered in her ear that he had a particular reason for wishing to follow them, and promised to keep by the side of the carriage all the way. She therefore yielded to his wishes, though, during the whole of the journey, she could hardly exert herself to speak, unless when he came to the window to inquire how they were.

Much against the wishes of the whole party, Monteith and Mary declined staying to sup with Mr. and Mrs. Hill; they left Mrs. Byron and Ned Gaylove, whom Henry had introduced to his uncle and aunt, and retired to their own house, dispirited and unwell. After taking some refreshment, Monteith advised his wife to go to her chamber; he was certain she was fatigued, and wanted rest. "Go, dearest

Mary; I will come to you the moment I have finished my letters, but they *must* be written to-night. I have passed my word, and cannot break it."

Mary sighed deeply. "*Must* I leave you, my own Donald?" said she, flinging her arms round his neck. "May not I stay until you have performed this painful task?"

"Who told you it was a painful one, Mary?"

"Your own ingenuous countenance, my adored husband."

Monteith started; then recollecting himself, he said, in a voice of thrilling tenderness, "Yes, Mary, I am thine; in the eyes of God I am thy husband; thine only will I ever be. Go, my angel, go to bed."

"I cannot sleep, Donald, unless you are near me."

"I will come then, my love, and write in your chamber." He then followed her to their bed-room, where, having sat a few minutes by her side, to watch, as he fondly imagined, her peaceful slumbers, he closed

the curtain, and withdrew to the table which contained his writing-desk.

Mary, however, was far from enjoying the repose so much desired by her husband. The form of the stranger, mild and interesting as it was, haunted her imagination. She could not avoid attaching the utmost importance to his appearance. What but the dread of having his residence discovered, could have made Monteith prefer quitting her side, and travelling on horseback? — What but the fear of being watched home by the stranger? Again, who could those letters be addressed to that required so much secrecy, and so much expedition? Through an aperture in the foot curtains, she perceived her beloved, her mysterious husband seated at his desk; his handsome features were clouded by the deepest sorrow; a letter lay before him, which he seemed to want courage to open. He took it up, looked at the seal, replaced it on the desk, then rose and came towards the bed, as if to see whether his actions were observed.

Mary still feigned to be asleep, and he again reseated himself. The letter was once more examined; and, as if by a desperate effort of fortitude, he broke the seal. It was now that the tenderness of Mary was, for the first time, put to the rack, as she beheld the man on whom her heart doted, and for whose sake she would joyfully have given up her existence, suffering the most agonizing tortures, without her daring to attempt to soften their poignancy, or to share them with him. Monteith closed the letter, and bursting into tears, for some moments rested his head on the desk.

What a sight for Mary! Every sigh that he uttered, every tear that he shed, pierced her to the soul; yet remembering the promise she had given him, she determined, if possible, not to break it. Scarce venturing to breathe, she wiped away the fast-falling tears of anguish, which rolled down her cheek, and again directed her eyes towards the beloved object of her care. Monteith had raised his head, which

he now supported with one hand, while in the other he held a letter, which, from the difference of the emotions his countenance betrayed, was evidently not the same. Indignation crimsoned his cheek, and flashed from his dark eyes, while, as he continued to read, every moment evinced the deep sense of injury, and the increasing resentment of a wounded mind. At the conclusion, he tore the letter into a hundred pieces, and scattered them on the floor; when, as if recollecting his imprudence, he instantly gathered them together, and committed them to the flames.

He paused, as if exhausted. His eye rested on the one which he had first read; anger gave way to a softer feeling, and compassion now took possession of his soul. For a moment he gazed on the paper, half opened it, shuddered, raised his hands and eyes to heaven, then held it over the candle, slowly and sorrowfully watching its rapid destruction. Not a vestige remained of what had caused him so

much misery; yet Mary felt a strange and indescribable sensation as she saw the last piece destroyed of that paper which would have discovered to her the sourse of her husband's secret and mysterious uneasiness.

At length he began to answer his unpleasant correspondents. A few lines seemed sufficient for the first; they displeased him, and he wrote another. That appeared more satisfactory. Having folded and directed it, he began the second. Pity soon ceased to be visible on his features, and they were once more crimsoned with resentment. His hand passed rapidly over the paper, yet it seemed too slow for the quick succession of his ideas. The task finished, he hastily closed the desk, leaving among the loose paper the copy of his first letter, and retired to bed, but not to rest. The internal vexation he endured banished sleep from his pillow; even in the arms of his Mary the deep sigh escaped him; and while his lips pressed hers in doting fondness, his full heart reproached him for

having hazarded that peace of mind which ought to have been dearer to him than his own.

CHAPTER VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the agitation which Mrs. Monteith experienced from beholding the distress of her husband, yet as she was perfectly ignorant of its fatal cause, she, by degrees, became more tranquil, and at length sunk into a gentle slumber on his bosom. Monteith continued to gaze on her lovely features, until his repeater warned him that it was time to rise. Not wishing to disturb his wife, he stole gently out of her chamber, leaving word with Betty that he should return to dinner; then mounting his horse, he proceeded to town to perform his unwelcome visit.

When Mary awoke she stretched forth her arms in vain. The beloved captive

was flown, and she remembered, with aggravated sorrow, the reason of his absence. She rose, and was on the point of ringing for Betty, when she perceived that the key remained in his writing-desk. Her heart almost instantaneously ceased to beat. The desk still, perhaps, contained the copy of the letter. She possessed the means to discover the secret of her husband, to divine the cause of his private misfortune. Should she take advantage of the opportunity which was now before her, and gratify a curiosity neither unreasonable nor unnatural? She paused; her hand rested on the top of the desk; her whole frame trembled almost to fainting, and she sank on the chair which he had occupied the preceding night. "If I violate my promise," said she, looking wishfully at the key, "shall I not forfeit the confidence, perhaps the affection of my Donald?—What right have I to pry into those domestic troubles of which he has warned me never to inquire? I have not even the plea of jealousy to excuse my doing a

mean action. The heart of Monteith is mine; he lives but for me; why then should I hazard his displeasure by gratifying a blamable inquisitiveness? How shall I meet him, after having read that of which he evidently wishes me to remain in ignorance? — How return his fond caress, after having braved his anger? No, I will not touch that fatal paper! I will not even expose myself to a second temptation; lest, should I again enter this chamber before he returns, all my good resolutions may vanish, and I may rashly discover that which may embitter every hour of my future years." Then hastily ringing for Betty, she inquired if her master had left any message, and continued to converse with her until she was ready to descend to the breakfast-parlour, fearing to be left alone even for a few minutes. After she had taken her solitary meal, she hastened to the house of Mr. Hill, where she determined to remain until the hour of dinner. "Now," said she, exultingly,

"I have gained a victory over myself, and my dear Donald will not have cause to suspect my faith, or doubt of my prudence."

Eliza met her at the door. "I was just coming to you, my dearest Mrs. Monteith," said she, "to inquire how you were. I thought you looked unwell last night, and my uncle and aunt were uneasy on your account." She then conducted her friend into the parlour, where the kind-hearted old couple rose to embrace their young favourite, and to express their satisfaction at seeing her look so much better. Mildred and Lydia were gone out with Henry to a neighbouring florist's, while Eliza, who longed to unbosom herself to Mary, declined going with them, preferring to pay a visit to the friend she loved dearly. After chatting some little time with Mr. and Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Monteith followed Eliza to her own room, under pretence of giving her opinion on a ball dress, which she was making for a dance, to which she had been invited by the gentleman whose son was engaged to her cousin Lydia.

They were no sooner alone, than Mary eagerly inquired what were the opinions of Mr. and Mrs. Hill respecting Mr. Gaylove? "Oh," cried Eliza, joyfully, "they were quite charmed with him before he left us, and have invited him to dinner to-morrow. He sung and played on my brother's flute, and seems to have won both their hearts by his vicacity and good-humour."

"My dear Eliza!" said Mary, affectionately pressing the hand she held, "I fear that this unfortunate meeting will make you forget all your prudent resolutions."

"I fear so too," replied her smiling friend; "but Edward has promised to leave off all his old habits, and to do every thing that my father can desire. Henry believes that he is serious; and if he is, I shall have no occasion to keep them."

"And if he is not, my dear Eliza, what then?"

"Why, I must be miserable! But tell

me, my valued friend, what do *you* think of him?"

"The little I have seen of Mr. Gaylove," replied Mary, "has pleased me much; he is handsome, without seeming to know it; and good-natured, without being what is termed foolishly so. In short, I think his acquaintance desirable; yet remember, my dear Eliza, that your father is strongly prejudiced against him, and that it is your duty not to encourage his addresses, unless sanctioned by your parent."

"How can I act?" said the pensive girl; "I cannot tell my uncle that my father objects to him, because he has unfortunately been too dissipated and too extravagant. Tell me, dearest Mrs. Monteith, what you would have me do."

"Will you promise to be guided by my advice if I give it, Eliza?"

"I will do my best," replied the no-longer animated girl.

"Well, then, my dear friend, I would have you be firm in your own conduct to-

wards Mr. Gaylove; treat him as the friend of your brother, rather than as the man whom you would prefer to all others, were you at liberty to choose. Tell him at once, my dearest Eliza, that you will not listen to any of his avowals of love, unless he can gain over your father to consent to your union."

Eliza shook her head—"Ah!" she exclaimed, "I acknowledge the *prudence* of your advice; but where is the heart that can be governed by the cold dictates of reason, in the presence of an eloquent and pleading admirer, unless, indeed, that that heart is rendered invulnerable by the shield of indifference? In that case, the arrows of love would be aimed in vain. I will endeavour, nevertheless, my dear Mrs. Monteith, to shun Mr. Gaylove as much as possible, and avoid giving him any opportunity to speak to me on so dangerous a subject."

"You will do right," replied her friend; "yet do not forget, Eliza, that Love can plead his cause through the medium of a

pair of expressive eyes, and that this silent confession is equally as dangerous as the common mode of speech. It is by this means that I have discovered in the timid, downcast look of your cousin Mildred, and the sudden blush which crimsoned her cheek when spoken to by your brother, how much she is interested in all that concerns him."

"I think the same," replied Eliza, "and am mistaken if my good uncle and aunt are not looking forward with pleasure to the time when Henry will avow the affection which I am certain he feels for Mildred. My father also will be gratified by the alliance, should it take place, for I have often heard him dwell with delight on the amiable qualities of my cousins."

"They are indeed amiable, my Eliza, and possess that happy, uniform serenity of mind and temper which cannot fail to ensure their happiness. Look not so grave, my dear girl; let us hope that your praiseworthy submission to the will of your father may ultimately bring about all that

your heart desires. Mr. Gaylove, when he is convinced that your hand is not to be gained unless with the consent of your parents, will very naturally make a serious determination to abjure those follies which have rendered him displeasing to your father."

Eliza felt a little relieved by this last sentence, and once more promised her young monitress to be guided by her good advice. Her cousins now appeared, and they descended to meet them, when the conversation became general; and Mary, who felt a sincere regard for every individual of this worthy family, and who was beloved by them all, found herself strongly pressed to dine with them next day, in order, as the old people said, to join in a little concert of their own, and to meet Mr. Gaylove, that she could not withhold her consent, provided that Monteith was disengaged.

"Do not disappoint us, my dear young friend," cried Mr. Hill, "for we shall be nothing without you and the captain.

Mr. Gaylove and Henry can play on the flute, Eliza on the piano, and we will send for your harp. Mildred and Lydia can sing when you are tired, and we shall be so comfortable, and so happy, if you are but with us."

Mary assured the old gentleman that nothing but her husband's being pre-engaged should prevent her from contributing all in her power towards the evening's amusement; then looking at her watch, she rose and took leave. On her return home, she found, as she had wished, that Monteith had arrived before her, and she hastened to receive his embrace. He was lying on the sofa in the parlour; the paleness of his looks, and the languor of his eyes, betrayed his want of rest. A blush of embarrassment flushed his cheek as he rose to meet his wife. Her manner, her unaltered tenderness, seemed to revive him, and to assure him that his secret was safe.

"You have made a long morning visit, my dear Mary, to your friends," said he,

"and will scarce have time to change your dress before dinner."

"Yes," said Mary, confusedly, "I went there immediately after breakfast, and have promised that we should dine with them to-morrow, as they wish, with our assistance, to make up a music-party. I hope you are not engaged? they will be so greatly disappointed if we are not there."

"Then we will go, my beloved, though I should much rather remain at home with you; yet if our presence is requisite to the happiness of those worthy creatures, we will not refuse them."

Mary kissed his cheek; she longed to inquire about his early visit, but she feared to offend, therefore hastened to change her dress, agreeable to the wishes of her husband. She saw that the key remained no longer in the desk, and felt convinced that his confusion arose from the fear that she might have discovered the important letter which it contained.

At dinner, Mary selected for Monteith all that could entice him to eat; but he

evidently swallowed with difficulty, and more to please her than to gratify himself. When the repast was over, Mary offered to play to him one of his favourite airs on the harp, on which she was now become, under his tuition, a good performer. So divine a master would have animated a less attentive pupil; but Mary, who was passionately fond of music, soon displayed those powers of which Monteith had a conviction that she was possessed.

"No, sweetest Mary," replied her husband, "I am too fatigued, both in body and mind, at this moment, to receive any relief from music. Let me lean on your bosom, and listen to the tender harmony of your voice; that, and that only, can allay the fever which consumes me."

Mary flung her arms round the neck of Monteith; she pressed her lips fondly to his; her blue eyes were moistened with tears. Monteith saw her inward suffering, and knew the cause. For a few minutes he held her to his bosom in trembling tenderness. At length he said, "My

Mary! my beloved, my dearest Mary! at last the fatal hour is come to try the strength of your obedience, your conjugal affection. The mystery which I hinted at before our union still exists; my domestic troubles assume a more formidable shape; they threaten to wound me in my only vulnerable part. I see your natural anxiety, your just curiosity, yet I can only remind you, my beloved, of your promise. Your own happiness, and my peace, depend upon your remaining in ignorance of what now torments me."

"And can *I* be happy, my Donald, while you are suffering under secret inquietude?—Can *I* sleep tranquilly, while your eyes are open only to tears of misery? Oh that you knew my fortitude, that you would but confide to me your griefs! indeed I am not unworthy to be trusted. This morning I had the power to satisfy my ardent desires (Monteith turned pale as death—a transient frown overspread his face), and yet I did not."

He breathed again—"Oh, my angelic

Mary!" he exclaimed, in a voice of admiring gratitude, "and had you sufficient self-command to witness my emotions last night, and not discover that you did so?"

"Out of love for you, Donald, and respect for your commands, I appeared to slumber. I longed, yet dared not, to rise and clasp you to my bosom—to wipe away your tears—to share your sorrow. I saw the fatal paper consigned to the desk; you left the key; I was alone; the means of discovering what could have so cruelly agitated you was then before me. My temptation was great indeed; I hesitated for a moment; I remembered my promise, and your certain displeasure; still fearing lest in an evil hour my discretion might forsake me, I left my room, resolved not to enter it until your return, and therefore went to Mr. Hill's, where I purposely continued until our hour of dinner."

Monteith again embraced her—"My own adored Mary!" said he, "I acknowledge, with pride, that you are worthy to be trusted, and that I would not conceal

from you any secret but this; of *this*, *this* alone, I trust you will for ever remain in ignorance."

"I must submit," said Mary, sighing deeply, "and yet how hard are the conditions imposed on me! Oh, Donald! it is not a woman's curiosity alone which excites my desires, it is the wish to soften down the keenness of those emotions I last night beheld."

"Be satisfied, my Mary," cried Monteith, interrupting her, "that *that* is impossible. The moment you became acquainted with the cruelty of my destiny, that moment would terminate for ever all my slender hopes of happiness. No, Mary, if I am fated to suffer for an action which I will not acknowledge, because I was basely betrayed, treacherously deceived, and advantage taken of an hour of unguarded exhilaration to force me into the performance of what I revolted at when sober—if for this my future life must be one continual scene of fear and mortification, let me suffer singly, or at least let my

internal misery be unknown to you, to *you* on whom my soul clings as to its only hope of peace and happiness. Let those alone share my tortures who voluntarily inflicted them."

"But the stranger," inquired Mary, in a low and faltering voice, while her pale face was moistened with tears, "you will not see him again—you will not be compelled to continue so disagreeable a connexion?"

"That stranger, my dear Mary, is innocent with respect to my sorrows, though circumstances obliged him to become one of my persecutors. He is mild and gentle in his nature; it is justice he seeks, not revenge, and is more inclined to pity than resent my irrevocable determination. Yes, Mary, I must see him again, but not in England. To-morrow he returns to his native country, to Scotland, the land of my birth, the scene of my disgrace. It is thither I must repair, as soon as I can procure leave of absence, to allay, if possible, the storm which is gathering, and which I

should be proof against, were it not for the fear lest thy bosom, my Mary, might be wounded in the conflict."

Mary could not support this unexpected shock. She burst into tears, and clinging round the neck of her husband, gave way to the agony she felt at the prospect of being separated from him, though but for a short time. Monteith fondly endeavoured to calm her agitation. Kissing away her tears, he besought her to moderate her feelings, and yield to necessity, assuring her that his stay should be as short as possible, and that his consenting to the journey was solely on her account, as he hoped that the result would be such as to prevent a recurrence of the scene she had last night witnessed, as well as to preclude the possibility of another such a parting being requisite.

"Why may I not accompany you?" said Mary, sobbing; "you could leave me in some place of concealment, while you proceeded to your father's."

"No, Mary," replied Monteith, with

firmness, "never will I consent to your visiting my native land, unless publicly as my wife. I go there myself for the last time; but not for the wealth of the Indies would I subject you to the possibility of encountering the insults and hatred of my misguided family. They have exiled me from their hearts; fain would they recall me by offers of wealth and power; my soul turns indignantly from their advances. It was light and happy, free and innocent, until they sought to fetter and enslave it. They bartered my peace to gratify their own private inclinations; they made me wretched, and yet complain of my ingratitude, because I remain firm to my first intention, and deny the legality of those claims which their treachery would impose upon me."

"Dreadful mystery!" exclaimed Mary, with a prophetic shudder, "that has thus the power to embitter my Donald's tranquillity, and to silence even the tender pleadings of his wife! Oh, my beloved husband! can my love for you be put to

a greater trial than it now is? Are you not going among those who have materially injured you, and *I* must not accompany you?—Are you not going to encounter all the horrors of domestic dissensions, to experience a repetition of last night's tortures? yet I am denied the sacred privilege, which is my glory, of participating in all your cares, and ameliorating your griefs! Have I not cause to murmur at the cruelty of my situation, since you prohibit my being your companion in this painful journey?" Again she sunk on his bosom, overcome by the idea of their temporary, and, as *she* deemed it, unnecessary separation.

"Mary, my own beloved Mary!" he exclaimed, as he tenderly embraced her, "I conjure you, by that affection which prompted you to bless me with your hand, under the peculiar mystery of my circumstances, which I sought not to conceal from you—by that generous love, I implore you to check the violence of your distress, and yield to the bitterness of my

present situation. Trust me, my adored Mary, that my heart suffers equally with your own. I live but in your presence; I enjoy no comfort unless you are by my side; and though I refuse you the right of accompanying me to Scotland, yet in so doing I deprive myself of all that binds me to the world. In making you mine, in uniting your fate to mine, I might be impelled by selfish motives; but in this instance it is *your* repose alone I seek. In the retirement of our cottage you are safe. During my absence, Mrs. Byron will, I am certain, become your guest; and the kindness of the Hills will be increased, to raise your drooping spirits. A week will most probably be the extent of my stay; but I must request you, on no account, to attempt to meet me on the road. I am not able to judge yet of the effect my visit may have on those to whom it is intended, and therefore caution you, my dear Mary, not to give way to the tender wishes of your heart, which would lead you to meet me perhaps half way; neither

will it be safe for me to write to you, after I reach the estate of my father; but I will direct to you, under cover to Mrs. Byron, before I join my family, and after I have quitted it. Should any letter be addressed to me, which I think impossible, promise me that no consideration shall tempt you to open it, and that, as before, you will preserve, even to Mrs. Byron, an inviolable silence on what has passed."

Mary raised her streaming eyes to those of her husband; she saw his handsome and manly features clouded by the deepest sorrow, yet expressive as ever of his undying passion for herself.

"I can refuse you nothing," said she, trying to repress her tears as she spoke, "and agree to all that you require, since my obedience, my patient resignation to your will, is necessary to your peace—to *your* peace, my Donald, not my own. The innumerable conjectures which my imagination, in spite of my reason, creates, are far worse to endure than the certainty of any hidden evil; yet, since you consign me to

this painful state of suspense, this torturing ignorance, more to be dreaded than death, I will endeavour to submit without murmuring. Let me but see you equally resigned to your fate, be it what it may—let me be assured that my affection still continues necessary to your comforts—that my tenderness has not lost its power over you, and I will bury in my own breast whatever the restless solicitude of my love and of my fears may give birth to."

Monteith pressed her passionately to his heart. "Angelic Mary!" he cried, "you are worthy of a happier lot. It is now that I feel the selfishness of my love, which has placed you in a situation so trying to your constancy and fortitude—it is now that I feel little in my own eyes, because I fear that I shall ultimately sink in yours."

"Oh, do not fear," she replied, in a tone of fascinating sweetness, "do not fear what is impossible! Even now, have I not given you an instance of my attachment, and of its strength, since I have consented

to remain, as you wish me, in this house, though I *had* hoped that no circumstances would have made such a wish at any time come from *your* lips?"

"I trust that it will be the last time," said Monteith, "and that this sacrifice of our dearest inclinations will be attended with consequences which will for ever prevent our enduring such another."

Fortunately for them both, the entrance of their kind maternal friend, the good Mrs. Byron, gave a temporary relief to their feelings. She was no sooner made acquainted with the necessity of Monteith's journey, than she immediately consented to stay with Mary until his return, promising to take good care of her during his absence. She tried to rally Mrs. Monteith out of her low spirits, making, however, every allowance for her distress, which, considering her youth and excessive love for her husband, was very natural, on being about to be separated from him for the first time. Her wit, her vivacity, her gay and affectionate manners, were of in-

finite service to her melancholy friends. It gave Monteith an opportunity to recover his self-command, and to assume an air of composure foreign to his heart.

Mary was deceived by this change, and, in proportion as she believed him regaining his tranquillity, she felt less dejected, less miserable, till, by degrees, hope once more reanimated her bosom, and she suffered herself to believe that this dreaded journey would, in the end, be conducive to the happiness of him she idolized, and that its effect might be to terminate those strange and mysterious domestic divisions which had power to shake the firm and noble mind of Monteith even to madness.

CHAPTER VII.

THE leave of absence no sooner arrived, than Monteith, fearing the effect his wife's tears and sighs might have upon his firm-

ness, sent for Mrs. Byron, and requested her to remain at the cottage, well knowing the respect and deference Mary had ever paid to her advice. To this she instantly assented, and Mary derived comfort and some share of courage from her presence. She saw Monteith depart with tolerable fortitude, allowing herself to trust to his repeated assurances that his stay would not exceed a week. Yet to her, who seemed only to live in his smiles and caresses, this short period of time appeared an age, especially when she remembered the painful mystery which hung over his journey. But as if Heaven, in pity to those sorrows which she was compelled to hide within the privacy of her own breast, mercifully compassionated her innocence and conjugal fidelity, she received an unlooked-for pleasure in a letter from her brother, which came on the same day that Monteith quitted home. George's ship was at Plymouth, and she might expect him the next day at the cottage.

So joyful an event could not fail of hav-

ing its due effect on the languid frame of Mary. She read the letter to Mrs. Byron, who rejoiced at the prospect of his visit. It could not have come at a more seasonable moment, as his presence would be doubly welcome to his sister, who had just lost, for the first time, the society of an adoring husband. They hastened to communicate the pleasing intelligence to the kind-hearted Hills, and to invite them to meet Mr. Fitzroy in the evening.

Mary could not avoid being flattered by the parental interest which Mr. and Mrs. Hill took in all that concerned her welfare. They now testified so much real satisfaction on the expected arrival of her brother, and of the comfort she would derive from his society at the present moment, that she could not avoid expressing her gratitude, in terms equally flattering to the old people, who promised to accompany their family the next evening, in order to join in welcoming her brother to England.

Mary counted every hour with impatience until the wished-for morning dawned.

She had passed a tolerable night, and rose early, to pray for the happiness of her beloved Monteith, and to add her hopes of his speedy return; nor was she forgetful to offer up her thanks to the Supreme Being, who thus benignly softened down the poignancy of her regrets by the unexpected arrival of a dear and highly-valued relation. Drawing from her bosom the picture of her husband, she continued to gaze on it for some moments in silent adoration, then pressing her lips to the beautiful likeness of Monteith, she was returning it to its place, when one of the golden links of the chain by which it was suspended snapped, and the miniature fell on the marble hearth. Mary stood motionless with surprise and terror. She stooped to examine her treasure; the glass was broken, and several of the fine pearls which surrounded the picture were loosened by the fall.

Her distress was now increased, and she carried the cause of it to the chamber of

Mrs. Byron, while the tears of vexation and disappointment stood in her eyes. Mrs. Byron was also grieved at a circumstance which gave ample scope to a mind tinctured by superstition; yet she concealed from Mary her sentiments, and comforted her by the assurance that she would herself convey the sacred likeness of Monteith to a jeweller that morning, who should reset the pearls, and restore it to her with all possible dispatch. Mary could scarce restrain her feelings at this second deprivation. She implored Mrs. Byron to urge the jeweller to have it repaired immediately, as she should be seriously unhappy until she was again in possession of what, next to Monteith himself, she valued most on earth.

The arrival of George Fitzroy dried the tears of his sister. They met with an increase of affection on both sides, and Mary was only heard to sigh as she wished for the beloved presence of her husband, whom she longed to introduce to her brother. George gazed with affection and

pride on the lovely form of his sister. He listened with grateful satisfaction to the warm praises she bestowed on Monteith, and joined in lamenting, that as his stay was confined to only a few days, he should be deprived of the felicity of shaking him by the hand, and testifying his regard for the man so fondly loved by his sister, and who, as *she said*, was so pre-eminently formed to make her one of the happiest of her sex.

Mrs. Byron experienced from him every mark of affection. Doting on his sister, he viewed with grateful kindness every being to whom she was attached, and who shewed her any particular attention. The Hills soon had their share of his regard. His penetration immediately discovered the high esteem in which his sister was held by all the family, they therefore instantly became *his* friends; and so completely were they delighted by the open and generous conduct of the young sailor, that they, with one voice, consented to his de

sire of going the next night with him to Drury-lane Theatre.

Mary would have declined being of the party during the absence of her husband, but her brother and Mrs. Byron soon silenced her scruples. "Under my protection, Mary," said George, "you are as safe as if guarded by Monteith himself. Were he now present, he could not surely object to your accompanying me and this amiable party to the theatre."

Mary remembered her husband's wish for her to live totally secluded, yet she feared to start such an idea, or to damp the happiness which sparkled in the bright eyes of her brother. She hesitated, nevertheless, to give finally her consent.

"Why, my dear girl," cried George, gaily, "Monteith, I hope, is not so covetous of his prize as to wish to shut you up from every eye but his? By my soul, if I was married to a handsome woman, I should take a pride and pleasure in carrying her to every place that I went to, and should enjoy most heartily the envy my

good fortune would excite. What do you say, Mr. Hill?" addressing himself to Henry.

"We landsmen," he smilingly replied, "may be allowed to differ from you heroes of the ocean. I believe that captain Monteith thinks with me, that a wife is never seen to so much advantage as in her own family; nor can the loveliness of woman be rendered more highly attractive than at the moment when she is fulfilling the tender duties of a wife and mother."

"Well, you are probably right," replied George; "but, Mary, I must have you go with us to-morrow."

"Certainly," said Mrs. Byron; "your sister will, I am confident, comply with your request, and that of all present." Mary could no longer refuse, and George was satisfied.

Anxious to surprise her brother, and afford him fresh cause to be pleased with her, Mary requested Eliza to take her seat at the piano, while she accompanied her in a beautiful and difficult piece of music.

George looked his pleasure. When they had finished, Mary smilingly took her harp, and striking the chords with confidence and skill, played and sung an exquisite Scotch air, which Monteith had taught her. Her brother, no longer master of himself, flung his arms round her neck in rapture; nor could the presence of the Hills restrain his warm expressions of delight at hearing his sister's masterly performance.

"Ah! my dear George," said she, "you would no longer wonder at my improvement, were you once to hear the magic touch of Monteith, once to listen to the rich harmony of his fine voice. With such a master, I must have been indeed a dull scholar, had I not attempted to acquire some portion of his heavenly fire."

George smiled at the romantic enthusiasm of his sister; but it was the smile of satisfied affection. Mary had ever been the object of his fondest regard; he had looked forward with extreme solicitude to her establishment in life, and his pride was

now gratified in hearing from the mouths of all who were present that Monteith was worthy of her. He expressed the most lively regret at being obliged to quit London before his return, as it was probable that many months would pass away before he should have an opportunity of beholding his brother-in-law. When informed of the selfish conduct of Mrs. Scorpion, he could not restrain his just indignation. "An old viper!" said he, "that wheedled my poor uncle out of his property, and enticed him to bestow on her and her *accomplished* daughter that which in right belonged to my sister. I have a mind to call on her, and thank her for her maternal care of Mary, and force her to pay that allowance which she has no pretensions to withhold." This, however, he was prevented from by the advice of Mrs. Byron, and the persuasion of his sister, who was not disposed to lose any more of her brother's society than what was absolutely necessary to the arrangement of his affairs.

The next morning, while George was dressing, Mary entered his room, and offered to tie his neck handkerchief—an office which she always performed for Monteith. Her quick eye instantly discovered what he evidently sought to conceal, namely, a couple of coral beads, which were hung round his neck. "Ah, George!" she gaily cried, "to what fair lady have these once belonged? Come, now, brother, let me be your confidant. Entrust me with the name of the object so highly prized, and so ardently beloved."

"You will laugh at me, Mary," said her brother, colouring.

"No, on my honour; I set too great a value on any thing touched by the hand I love to laugh at you."

"But I cannot even tell you her name," he replied, "and yet I would sooner lose all I possess than these beads. The evening before I quitted Plymouth, I was walking on the beach, anticipating the pleasure I should feel on seeing you and Monteith, when I stopped to take a survey of two ladies,

who were passing. The one was old and quizzical, and appeared to be preaching a sermon to her companion, a lovely girl, not more than fifteen, the uncommon beauty of whose form, and languishing black eyes, with cheeks which vied with the vivid carmine, reminded me of a Spanish lady, who had nearly made me her captive for life. I felt rooted to the spot, and continued to watch them as they slowly moved forward; each step, each turn of the body, brought more strongly to my recollection the amiable donna Isabella. They turned, and I was again gratified by a sight of the young lady's features. She raised her head; our eyes met; the admiration mine expressed she seemed to understand, for, blushing deeply, she lifted up her hand, probably to draw down her veil, when it caught in a long chain of coral, which was suspended round her neck. The chain broke, and several of the beads fell to the ground. I instantly offered my assistance in recovering them, while

the old lady's ill-humour evidently increased by this accident. In presenting her young and lovely companion with those which I had found, I ventured to press her hand, and was not discouraged for my presumption. No frown obscured the beauty of her face. She thanked me, in a sweet tone of voice, for the trouble I had taken, and would have said more, but was prevented by the old lady, who reproached her for having been the cause of her staying out longer than she had intended. I followed them at a distance, and saw them get into a carriage, which drove off too rapidly for me to discover the arms. I shall, however, be able to trace out the abode of this enchanting girl when I return, as I remember the livery; and as it is most likely that she resides at Plymouth, I shall find some means of conveying to her my sentiments."

"And will you let me know the result?" inquired his sister. "But you have awakened my curiosity, dear George, to learn

something respecting donna Isabella, and I hope you will not refuse to gratify it."

Young Fitzroy checked the rising sigh, and thus began—"When our frigate lay at anchor in the bay of Cadiz, the officers were permitted occasionally to go on shore, and partake of the recreations which the place afforded, and which the inhabitants varied as much as possible, willing to afford the English every gratification in their power. At the house of don Joseph Bonelli I was received with the most flattering attentions. He had three daughters, all of them exquisitely beautiful, who vied with their father in kindness and hospitality. The retiro, or country house, of don Joseph was near the sea; its situation romantic and picturesque. Numerous fountains supplied the gardens with water, while citrons, olives, lemons, oranges, vines, apricots, figs, and almonds, mingled together in pleasing confusion."

"Oh what a sweet spot! How I should like to have seen it!" said Mary.

"In this delightful retreat," continued

George, "I passed many happy hours. The society of his lovely daughters was eagerly sought after by my brother officers, who, like myself, preferred passing an evening at his house to that of any other. I have said that the three sisters were exquisitely beautiful; but I ought to have remarked, that the youngest was the chief object of general attraction. She was tall, slender, and beautifully proportioned; her face of a fine oval; her eyes black, and full of tenderness; her arched eyebrows gave a fine expression to her features, which were full of truth and intelligence; her mouth was small, and the vivid red of her lips could only be equalled by the brilliant colour of her cheeks. Her looks were at once gentle and animated; modest, yet occasionally expressive of the tenderness she felt. At my first introduction her air was embarrassed, but after a few visits, she acquitted herself with ease; her conversation was at once delicate, noble, and refined; and I soon perceived that donna Isabella possessed a heart generous,

kind, and capable of a sincere and lasting attachment."

"Alas! my poor brother!" exclaimed Mary.

"In the society of this lovely and elegant female," said George, "I found a delight, a charm, which I had never before experienced. Open and ingenuous, of a warm disposition and lively fancy, donna Isabella sought not to conceal from me the affection which engrossed her whole soul. Love is the chief business of the Spanish women. With them it is a noble passion, proceeding neither from self-love, vanity, nor coquetry. They love long and fervently, and are capable of making every sacrifice. In short, the women of no other country can compare with them on this subject; and had not circumstances ordained it otherwise, I know not, my dear Mary, whether you might not have had a Spanish sister-in-law."

"But, my dear George, what prevented your soliciting don Joseph's consent to your union with the amiable Isabella?"

"Honour, my dearest Mary—the honour of a British sailor, which shrinks from the idea of infringing on the rights of another. The lovely Isabella was betrothed to a gallant youth, then fighting under our immortal Wellington, for the preservation of his country's freedom. How could I bear to steal from him his soul's dearest treasure, and to give birth to feelings of resentment in a heart which beat with gratitude and friendship for every Englishman? It was a calm and heavenly evening, when, seated under the luxuriant foliage of the algaroba, with Isabella, her head resting on my bosom, I first learnt that her hand was the lawful property of don Carlos, and that her parents' consent and wishes sanctified their union. My agitation was extreme; my arms encircled her slender form; her panting bosom beat against my own; and her black eyes, melting with tenderness, betrayed how willing she was to sacrifice to me the peace of the absent don Carlos. I felt the danger of my situation, and trembled lest I should become

a victim to a passion which would disgrace me in my own opinion, and that of my countrymen. I was no sooner released from the magic of her embrace, than I went on board my ship, and, notwithstanding the violence I did my own feelings, carefully avoided for the future all private interviews with the seducing Isabella. She wrote to me, remonstrating on my cruelty, and requesting me to meet her. My reply discovered at once the fervency of my love, and my resolution nevertheless to be guided by honour and justice. Isabella could not suffer more on reading my determination than I did in making it. In pity to her, as well as myself, I pleaded illness for the rest of the time that we lay off Cadiz, and deprived myself of the felicity of going to don Joseph's, who, however, most obligingly testified his regret at my absence.

"Thus you see, my dear Mary, that your brother has preserved his integrity at the expence of his peace; yet I rejoice at the victory I have gained, which, I as-

sure you, was no inconsiderable one; for I would sooner be placed in the thickest of the enemy's fire, than exposed to such another temptation."

"And yet, my beloved George, are you not on the point of entangling yourself in a new connexion, which may prove as dangerous as the first?"

"I hope not," replied young Fitzroy, gravely, "since I find it impossible to relinquish my intention of discovering who is the lovely girl whose likeness to Isabella awakened every fond idea, and almost tempted me to believe it was herself I saw. With difficulty I was prevented by the presence of the old moralizer from snatching her to my bosom, and assuring her that I was ready to devote every hour of my life to her service. Surely, Mary, some kind little spirit, favourable to my passion, broke the string, and scattered the beads on the sand, thus enabling me to possess myself of what had once belonged to the beautiful unknown."

"Poor Isabella!" sighed the feeling sis-

ter of George; "how unfortunate that her hand should be engaged to one, who, however he might be worthy of it, yet did not possess her heart! I congratulate you, notwithstanding, my dear George, upon the firmness you displayed; and while I sympathize in the sorrows of donna Isabella, I feel proud in having a brother whose high sense of justice and national honour triumphed over the tenderest wishes of his soul."

"From the constitutional gaiety of my disposition," said the noble youth, "few would imagine how deep was the impression made on my heart by this fascinating Spaniard. My brother officers rallied me on the conquest I had made, but when they became acquainted with its unfortunate termination, there was not a man of them who did not sincerely commiserate my destiny. Unwilling, however, to become an object of their pity, I roused my sinking spirits, and buried in my own bosom every trace of the disappointment I had received."

"In the regret I experienced from this unexpected bar to my felicity," continued George, "I first learnt how to appreciate the value of a heart once entirely my own, but which my haughty soul disdained to accept, from motives and feelings perhaps illiberal and unjust. You are not ignorant, my dear Mary, that my indignation was most keenly excited by the unhandsome conduct of lady Sarah Fitzroy towards yourself. No personal consideration of interest could induce me to continue an inmate of her house, as soon as I became acquainted with her neglect of one so dear to me. In bidding adieu to a residence which had been my home ever since my childhood, I was compelled to abandon the companions of my infant sports, and to include them in the displeasure I felt towards their parents. This occasioned me some mortification; for though all but one of my cousins partake of the false pride of their mother, yet to me they had ever behaved with affability and kindness.

"The gentle Delia, lady Sarah's youngest daughter, was so unlike her sisters, that I frequently rallied her on her want of that hereditary stateliness and *hauteur* for which they were uniformly noticed. Brought up together, and accustomed to associate constantly with each other, Delia soon became my favourite companion, and the confidant of all the trifling vexations which I sometimes experienced while a boy. With engaging sweetness, she would throw her arms round my neck, and press her lips innocently to mine, then lead me to her sisters, and adjust all our differences. Had I been inclined to take advantage of this amiable girl's partiality, I might have punished the insolent pride of her mother, and given a check to her ambitious views; but I scorned to owe my independence to the tenderness of my cousin, and would not have accepted of a throne from a daughter of one who had grossly insulted my beloved Mary."

Mrs. Monteith affectionately embraced her brother—"I am persuaded," said she,

"that this interesting girl must be the one whose miniature I saw at the Exhibition, and noticed for the gentleness and sweetness which were visible in every line of her countenance, and which were not to be met with in those of her sisters. She seems to have inherited a portion of that softness of manners which belong to her father's family, and which, I fear, will draw upon her the ill-will of her mother and her sisters."

"Such are my fears also," replied George, "and I feel grateful to Providence that I am not accessary to her incurring their resentment. Delia is likewise the prettiest of lady Sarah's daughters; and this is another motive for the envy of her sisters. But neither of my cousins can vie in personal attractions with the neglected and despised Mary. The beauty you discovered when a child, my dear sister, is the chief reason why you have experienced the mean jealousy of their mother, who, I am confident, dreaded lest her girls should be outdone in form and features by the

granddaughter of Mr. Seymour. Her son, on whom she dotes even to a folly, received a severe reprimand, for only wishing to behold his exiled cousin; and I had it from good authority, that he was ordered never again to mention your name. Oh, my dear Mary! pardon the fond ambition of your brother; I had vainly flattered myself that your person would have raised you to an equality with this proud daughter of an earl, and that I should have had the gratification of seeing you married to a man of rank and fortune. Heaven has otherwise disposed of you, and if you are happy, I ought to be contented."

Mrs. Monteith assured him, that could he but once see her husband, he would be able to judge for himself how perfect was her happiness; but that he might form some estimate of what he was, she requested him to spare time next day to call on the jeweller who had his miniature to mend.

In order to gratify the fond partiality of her brother, Mary dressed herself with be-

coming elegance, to attend him in the evening to the theatre. She saw that he was delighted by her appearance, and she would have been completely happy herself, had she been able to see the same tenderness beam from the eyes of Monteith. His absence created a void in her heart, which not even the caresses of George, whom she loved next to her husband, could fill. Mr. Fitzroy had taken a box for the night, as their party was enlarged by the presence of Edward Gaylove, and the young merchant to whom Lydia Hill was betrothed. Mrs. Byron, of course, made one among them. Her vivacity and ready wit made her the general favourite with the young people, who on no account would suffer her to excuse herself from joining in all their little excursions and amusements.

George was seated between his sister and Eliza Hill, whose natural beauty was increased by the secret pleasure she felt at having Ned Gaylove placed on the other side of her. Mary was completely en-

grossed by the performance, when her brother, whispering, told her to cast her eyes to the opposite box, in which were seated lady Sarah, her son, and two of her daughters. She obeyed, and instantly recognised in the features of the youngest the interesting Delia. At the same moment, as if by instinct, the eyes of the latter were directed towards their box. She started; the colour receded from her cheeks; and Mary's heart too well divined the cause of her agitation, as she made a slight inclination of her head on discovering George, who, half returning it, began to peruse the play-bill he held in his hand, with an eagerness which betrayed that he partook of the emotion he had just witnessed.

Mary was not free from inquietude. The sight of relations from whose presence she was exiled by false pride and illiberal prejudice, damped her evening's entertainment. Every now and then she cast a look towards their box, and each time perceived that she was an equal object of in-

terest to lady Sarah and her family. The gentle eyes of Delia seemed to dwell on her with a fearful curiosity, which convinced her that she was ignorant as to her near relationship to George; those of lady Sarah bespoke her inward vexation and resentment, and discovered all the littleness of her soul; while the angry glances which she occasionally darted on herself and her brother, excited no other feeling in the mind of Mary than a regret that Delia should be the child of lady Sarah Fitzroy.

"I am confident," said George, who now rose at the conclusion of the act, "that my cousins are not informed of who you are. Charles has condescended to honour me with a bow, to which I am solely indebted, my dear Mary, to the power of your charms. He has scarce taken his eyes off our box, since he perceived who it contained; and though his pride might lead him to disown you as a cousin, yet, unconscious of the claim you have on his regard, he now pays that homage to your

beauty which he would withhold were he informed that you were the granddaughter of Mr. Seymour."

"I am not desirous of fixing his attention," replied Mrs. Monteith, who had frequently been obliged to turn from the gaze of his bold black eyes. "But, my dear George, how is it that you appear to have been equally indifferent to the play? Had not *your* attention been directed that way, you could not have known what engrossed *that* of your cousin. Poor Delia! how flattering to her friendship is this unexpected notice on your part!"

George looked embarrassed; the crimson on his cheek was deepened; he *felt* the justice of his sister's remark, and for the remainder of the night scarce glanced his eyes towards the companions of his boyish years, his sister and the lively Eliza sharing in their turn his particular attentions. Once, however, he caught himself looking the same way. Delia was leaning pensively against the box; her

hand supported her head, and her eyes were fixed mournfully on him. His heart softened at the remembrance of her innocent caresses, of the numerous proofs of affection which he had always received, and which she had willingly given, and he now, for the first time, felt a sentiment steal into his bosom, which was by no means in unison with the indignation he had hitherto nourished, rather than repressed, for her family. A glance, however, of the scowling brow of her mother, put to flight his new-born tenderness, and he recollected only the meanness of her conduct towards his sister.

At the conclusion of the play, as he was conducting Mary and Mrs. Byron to the carriage, they passed lady Sarah and her family. Again her son bowed to George, who coldly returned it, and again Mary was honoured by his stare of admiration; while Delia, almost fainting, from feelings she had so long tried to repress, clung trembling to his arm. The heart of George partook of all his parents' kind-

ness; he saw and pitied the agitation of the affectionate Delia, and his first impulse was to press her hand in his as she passed him.

In a moment the pensive features of his cousin brightened into the glow of sudden happiness; she cast on him a look replete with meaning; it seemed to say, and am I indeed remembered?—Have you not quite forgotten me? More it could not express, as her brother was obliged to hasten his movements to follow lady Sarah; but the impression which the look of Delia made, sunk deep in the minds of George and his sister, who returned home to sup with the Hills. It was generally remarked that they had left a part of their usual vivacity at the theatre—a remark which both acknowledged to be true, although it was to Mrs. Byron alone that they chose to confide the cause.

CHAPTER VIII.

ALTHOUGH circumstances had been such as to prevent Mrs. Monteith and her brother from enjoying the tender intercourse arising from their near relationship, yet few brothers and sisters felt for each other the same restless anxiety, the same affectionate solicitude. George, on his part, looked forward with pride and pleasure to his sister's establishment in life, determining to add to her slender fortune all that was in his power, and hoping that the beauty of her form and features, and the fascinating innocence and playful sweetness of her manners, would raise her to an equality with those whose birth alone made them her superiors. In this he was painfully disappointed by her marriage with Monteith, who, notwithstanding the partiality evinced for him by his friends,

and the doting fondness of his wife, nevertheless appeared to George to be a character cold and mysterious.

He had received from him but one letter since he had become his brother; and though it dwelt with animating rapture on the happiness he enjoyed in being the husband of Mary, yet, in other respects, George thought it distant, and wanting in kindness to himself. He longed to be introduced to him, that he might judge more accurately of the man to whom the peace of his sister was entrusted; and he felt equally vexed with Mary, on finding that the shortness of his leave of absence would not allow of his waiting the return of her husband. The retirement in which he found her, the confined number of her acquaintances, and, above all, Monteith's solitary visit to his family, alarmed the pride of young Fitzroy, lest the want of fortune on the side of Mary should have given birth to a desire to conceal his marriage from their knowledge. Not wishing, however;

to wound either the delicacy or the tenderness of his sister, he forbore to mention to her his suspicions; yet, in the fulness of his heart, he could not refrain from betraying them to Mrs. Byron, who, while she disguised her real sentiments on the subject, did all in her power to tranquillize the mind of the affectionate young sailor.

Mrs. Byron represented to George that business of consequence had called Monteith to Scotland—that his mode of travelling would be rapid—and that it was most probable his unbounded fondness for his wife had made him fearful lest her health, and that of his unborn infant, might be endangered, should she accompany him. He appeared to be satisfied, and warmly expressed his thanks to Mrs. Byron for the maternal care she evinced towards his sister.

"I feel," said he, "grateful to Providence, who has bestowed on Mary such a friend, such an adviser as yourself; and I shall quit town with less regret, since you

have assured me that no circumstances shall deprive her of your protection and kindness."

It was a cause of much vexation to Mrs. Monteith that her brother was unable, from the pressure of his affairs, to call on the person who had the miniature of her husband, and who was compelled, from the hurry of business, to retain it beyond the time he had promised. She was also not perfectly at ease respecting the new connexion which he was resolved to cultivate, on account of the strong resemblance the lady bore to donna Isabella Bonelli. The ardent spirit of George would not yield to any apparent difficulty or danger, and she trembled lest he might get entangled in a pursuit which would disturb his future peace, while, at heart, she believed him attached to his amiable cousin.

On the day of his departure, all Mrs. Byron's wit and eloquence were exerted in vain to animate the brother and sister; both felt an unusual depression of spirits, which could only be attributed to the pro-

bability that many months would elapse before they again met. At dinner George could not eat, and a tear was seen to dim the lustre of his eyes, as they rested on his sister with brotherly affection.

"This is a weakness I am not subject to," said he, addressing himself to Mrs. Byron, who was endeavouring to rouse his natural gaiety, "but *you* have a mind and heart, my dear madam, that will make an excuse for my present feelings on quitting, perhaps for ever, a being whom I tenderly love, and for whose welfare and happiness I am more interested than for my own. Many circumstances may occur before we meet again; yet what have I to fear? Do I not leave her with *you*—you who were the chosen friend of our lamented mother, and who voluntarily became a parent to her daughter, when she most wanted the advice of one?—Do I not also leave her under the protection of her husband, who, though fate has denied our being personally known to each other, I have every reason to believe lives but for her? Yet

I would give all I am possessed of could I but wait his arrival, could I but see him."

"The coral beads, my dearest George?" inquired his sister, who had risen from her seat, and who now flung her arms round his neck, trying to force a smile, while her cheek was moistened with tears.

"Yes, Mary," replied George, returning her embrace, as he seated her on his knee, "even the coral beads—nay, all my hopes of love and glory would I relinquish, to be assured that thy happiness is secure."

"Ah, George!" said Mrs. Monteith, as she tenderly kissed his glowing cheek, "my heart is equally solicitous for yours. Resign those relics of romantic passion—forget that you ever saw the beautiful girl who once possessed them—and remember only the gentle virtues, the constant and never-failing kindness of one who, if I err not, prefers you to all the world."

"Name her no more," replied young Fitzroy, striving to repress a sigh. "Lady Sarah could never forget that my father's wife was the daughter of Mr. Seymour, who, though a gentleman, was nevertheless steward to sir Charles. Neither can I forget that she looked down with contempt upon my mother, and treated, with cruel neglect, my orphan sister, merely because she was less nobly descended than herself, and inherited all the beauty and grace of her ill-treated parents."

"But, my beloved George, the gentle Delia is innocent of her mother's faults; she would not have refused to acknowledge the sister of her bosom friend and companion."

"Oh, no; it is but just to the merits of Delia to own that she has often spoke to me on the subject of her mother's unfortunate prejudice, and lamented, in the strongest terms, her inability to convey to you her sentiments in your favour."

"Generous girl!" exclaimed Mrs. Monteith, with energy, which she felt, "I yet

hope that we may meet, and that my dear George will be the occasion of our first introduction."

"I know to what you allude, Mary, but do not deceive yourself with false hopes. I am firm in my principles; when once resolved, immoveable. Lady Sarah shall never have to upbraid me with stealing into her family, and ennobling myself, as she would term it, by an alliance with the granddaughter of the earl of C——. Delia is likewise mistress of a handsome fortune, left her by an aunt, and this again precludes our union. It would be said that I had made *my fortune* by meanly taking advantage of the very natural kindness which either of her daughters must feel towards one brought up, as I was, under their father's roof, and that my return for the liberality which was shewn me in my youth, was basely to steal away the chief ornament of their family; thus repaying the affection I had received by an action of unpardonable ingratitude. I love Delia—every one that knows her must

love her. Were she the child of any woman but lady Sarah, I should prefer her to all her sex; but as she is, the whole world would never persuade me to become her husband."

"Alas, poor Delia!" sighed Mary, who felt very little inclined to study the peace or tranquillity of lady Sarah at the expence of her brother's, "alas, poor Delia! And can you, George, whose heart is cast in the tenderest mould, and who feel for every living creature that is unfortunate, can you so easily sacrifice this sweet girl to a false sentiment of honour and pride? I saw the struggles which she made to repress her feelings at the theatre. I saw and sympathized in her distress; nor were you, George, at that moment, perfectly free from self-reproach."

"You do me injustice, Mary; I had nothing to reproach myself with on her account, since I have never owned to her the extent of that affection our near relationship authorizes me to feel. I was not composed, I acknowledge; how could

I be? I knew her real sentiments—I saw her agitation—I felt, perhaps, more deeply than I had done before. This feeling made me press her hand as she passed close by me, yet I was sorry afterwards that I had done so. It might give birth to hopes which never can be realized—to wishes which must ever be fruitless. No, Mary, if ever I feel a sentiment of self-reproach, it is when I remember the liberal treatment I experienced from every member of her family; even from lady Sarah herself, who scarce made any difference between me and her darling son. I have, on your account, cut for ever the connexion. My gratitude may here be called in question. I dislike lady Sarah for her unjust neglect of one who, more than myself, required her protection; but I will not wound her in the vulnerable place; I will not rob her of her daughter's duty and affection. I cannot in conscience repay her goodness to *myself* by such black ingratitude. This alone prevents my yielding to the tenderness which Delia never failed

to excite; this alone bound my tongue in the fetters of pride, and silenced every look that could betray what my honour was forced to conceal. I have taught my early passion to give way to necessity; and when I first saw the languishing eyes of donna Isabella, and heard the harmony of her voice, which addressed me in accents of thrilling tenderness—when I read in her expressive countenance all that she was capable of feeling, and of sacrificing for my sake, the image of the mild and amiable Delia gave place to a more ardent and animating beauty, to one, in short, more suited to my taste and disposition. I loved Isabella with romantic fervour; yet even when clasped to her snowy bosom, which beat only for me, when encircled in her graceful arms, and exposed to all the temptations of love and opportunity, I thank Heaven that I had sufficient presence of mind to recollect, that in giving way to the passion which engrossed my whole soul, I should for ever sully the purity of my fame, and, by robbing a noble Spani-

ard of his destined bride, plunge a dagger in the heart of one who was fighting for all that was dear to him on earth. I broke from the dangerous chains which had held me captive—I sacrificed the woman I adored, and who would have died for me, to a sense of justice, of honour, of gratitude. Isabella is dead to me for ever; but England still contains her likeness, and, if I live, before three days are gone by, I will find out the name and place of her abode. Come, Mary, drink success to this fresh idol of your brother; then take your harp, and play me some of your liveliest tunes."

Mrs. Monteith obeyed, in order to please her brother; but in truth she was too much inclined to favour the attachment of Delia to wish him in her heart any success with the beautiful unknown. She made him promise to write often, and to give her a true account of his actions, assuring him in return, that he should not have to complain of the tardiness of her replies.

When the chaise drove up to the door, young Fitzroy rose hastily, and pressing the hand of Mrs. Byron to his lips, he said, "Of all the words in our language, I hate most that detestable *farewell!* I never could say it to those I love, without feeling ready to hang myself afterwards. Believe me, my dear madam, that while I have life, I shall ever remember your kindness to Mary; and it consoles me to think that you will always be near her, to afford her consolation and advice in the absence of her husband." Then turning to his sister, he kissed away her tears, and holding her some moments to his bosom, seemed to be acquiring courage to take leave of her. At length he requested her to assure Monteith of his brotherly love, and of the sincere regret it occasioned him that he was unable to wait his return.

"Tell him," said he, "that I confide to his care the dearest treasure I possess, and that he is not only master of *your* happiness, but of *mine*. When next I visit England, I shall hope to embrace him."

Saying this, he again pressed his sister to his breast, who still clung round his neck, unwilling to part with him. "One kiss more, my dear Mary," said he, "and if God spares my life, I shall hope to return to you, if not richer in pocket, yet richer in fame. Some unknown friend watches over my welfare, and I expect, when I see you again, that I shall be advanced another step in rank."

Mary saw him depart with tearful eyes; she immediately remembered who was the secret friend of her brother; and, as she returned pensively to the parlour, could not avoid falling into a train of reflections, which were only broken by the proposal of Mrs. Byron, that they should go and call on the Hills.

The time now drew near when she had reason to expect the return of Donald. With feverish impatience she counted the hours as they passed, until she actually became unwell, from the nervous agitation of her mind. She had heard from him twice, and he still thought he should be able to

reach home at furthest on the tenth day. That had gone by, and Mrs. Byron had recourse again to her inventive powers, to still the restless apprehension of her young friend. A thousand fears crowded on the imagination of Mary as evening approached, and not even a line from Monteith. Faint from want of rest, and sick at heart, she continued to pace her chamber, starting at every noise, and listening with breathless anxiety for the sound of the carriage wheels.

Midnight arrived, and Mrs. Byron and Betty implored her to lie down, and endeavour to compose herself. Worn out with the agitation of her feelings, she consented; and had just fallen into a slumber, when Monteith, in a chaise and four, drove up to the gate of the cottage. Fearing to alarm the object of his fondest affections, he scaled the wall, and went round to the kitchen door. It was opened most joyfully by Betty, who in an instant informed him of the harrassed state of her mistress. Monteith stole softly to the

chamber of his wife, where Mrs. Byron was sitting. On seeing him so unexpectedly, an exclamation of surprise and pleasure escaped her, which awoke her sleeping friend, and in a moment she was in the extended arms of her husband, who, pressing her passionately to his bosom, forgot in her embrace all the vexations he had endured since he had quitted her. After procuring him some refreshment, Mrs. Byron withdrew, and left them to give way to that tenderness which even her presence, in some degree, restrained.

The watchful eyes of Mary eagerly ran over the beloved features of her husband; she thought he looked pale and thin; but he assured her that the alteration in his appearance only proceeded from excessive fatigue, as he had travelled post, hardly allowing time for a change of horses; but now that he was returned to her, he scarce felt the effects of his rapid journey. "It has appeared an age, my adored Mary, since I saw you," said he, fondly pressing his lips to hers; "but how have you pass-

ed your time? You look unwell, my beloved; your hand feels feverish; I fear that you have made yourself ill on my account."

"I do not feel ill, now that you have returned, my dearest Donald," replied Mrs. Monteith, who saw that he was alarmed; "I was apprehensive that some accident might have prevented your arriving on the day you promised, and that idea occasioned me considerable agitation; but do not give it a moment's thought. I am too happy, too grateful, to see you once more restored to me, to think or to feel that I am unwell."

"Sweetest, dearest Mary! it was not in my power to be at home yesterday; it was with difficulty I could get away as soon as I did; but I have endured so much by this temporary absence from home, that nothing but the most positive necessity shall ever force me to leave it again, unless you accompany me."

"Now you are kind indeed, my Donald! All that I ask of Heaven is, that

we may never be separated from each other. I could endure any deprivation, but that of your loved society."

Monteith gazed on her with extacy; again and again he kissed her warm cheek, and thought he discovered in her fresh beauties, which he had not before perceived; while Mary, as she felt the tender pressure of his lips to hers, as she read in his fine eyes the affections which herself inspired, was convinced that Heaven could not, in all its bounty, bestow so dear a gift as the heart of Monteith.

The mysterious journey was soon forgotten by the sister of George Fitzroy. Her husband was now constantly with her; he seldom quitted her, unless compelled by business, and even then his return was hailed with every demonstration of tenderness by his wife, whose very being seemed to depend on his smiles and caresses. It appeared almost impossible that the love of Monteith could receive an increase; yet, as the time drew nigh which was to bless him with the dear and hallowed name of

father, his affection knew no limits; he was miserable if he was obliged to leave his Mary for only a few hours; and his whole care and attention was directed to one object, that of amusing her mind, and diverting her languid spirits from the delicacy of her own situation.

In this he succeeded; for so unbounded was the attachment of Mary, that the idea of death had no terrors, if she was allowed the blessing of breathing her last on the bosom of Monteith. But no sooner did she become a mother, than she felt the impossibility of retaining the same indifference with respect to her quitting the world. She had now new duties to perform, and a new character to assume; and never had Mary appeared so lovely, so amiable, even in the eyes of her husband, as she now did, in devoting her chief attention to the health and welfare of her child.

Monteith hung over her in rapture, as he beheld the sweet pledge of their mutual tenderness press with its coral lips the

white bosom of its young and beautiful mother—as he saw that mother gaze with speechless transport on the blooming countenance of her little boy, or listen to her fond hopes that he would grow up to be his father's image. It was then that Monteith, in the fulness of his soul, would clasp his arms around them, and exclaim, "Oh that bliss such as this may last—that Heaven may allow me to devote my life to those adored beings! So dearly do I value every look of thine, my Mary, that I once thought my selfish heart would not yield any of its privileges even to my child—that I should even envy it a portion of thy caresses; yet this laughing boy has so contrived to win me to his cause, that I not only bear with composure his robbing me of one half of thy attention, but willingly give up to him a part of my own time, and consent that he should share with me in the invaluable love and embraces of his mother."

Mrs. Monteith smiled on him affectionately—"Dearest Donald!" said she, pla-

cing the good-tempered baby in his arms, "we will both share in the pleasing task of rearing this sweet blossom. To us he shall be indebted for his first comforts, his first ideas. The worthy Betty shall be entrusted with the care of our treasure, at those moments when it is necessary to confide him to another; but, thank Heaven! the retirement we live in will permit us to devote to him the chief of our time; and as he grows up in life, he will not fail to remember with gratitude the unceasing kindness of his fond and considerate father."

"Nor thy unwearied tenderness, my Mary," replied Monteith. "Oh! if my boy partakes of the nature of his father, he will ever cling to his mother with religious veneration; his gratitude will be as unbounded as his affection. What think you, my Mary—shall we name this, our first blessing, after your brother? it is a compliment he well deserves."

To this, however. Mrs. Monteith would not consent. Great as was her regard for her brother, she could not agree to bestow

on her son any other name than that of his father, which, to her, possessed a magic charm. Accordingly, at the desire of Monteith, who fixed an early day for the occasion, Mary invited the Hills, and had Gaylove, with the betrothed husband of Lydia, to be present at the christening. Eliza was to be his godmother, and her lover begged hard to join with the brother of Mrs. Monteith in becoming a surety for the proper education of the young Heathen. Monteith raised no objection to this offer. Whatever might have been the youthful follies of Mr. Gaylove, he certainly appeared to have abandoned them; and as he was a man of fortune, taste, and extreme good-nature, joined to a mind of the higher order, he accepted him with pleasure as godfather to his child.

This arrangement could not fail of delighting Eliza Hill. She had, to the utmost of her power, followed the prudent advice of Mrs. Monteith, and avoided all private conversations with Mr. Gaylove;

yet all her caution was vain, and he succeeded in drawing from her the reason of her altered manner. No sooner was he informed of the determination she had made, never to be his unless with the consent of her father, than he immediately resolved to change his mode of living, and to prove, by his future good conduct, the sincerity of his passion.

The steadiness of his behaviour, the solidity of his conversation, were soon noticed by his friends at Brompton; and so much had he ingratiated himself into the esteem of Eliza's uncle and aunt, that the former could not avoid mentioning him in his letters to her father, in terms of flattering encomium. The old gentleman, notwithstanding his dislike to the match, was nevertheless sufficiently candid and generous to acknowledge, that if Mr. Gaylove was really serious in his *conversion*, he was a young man that no gentleman need be ashamed to call his son-in-law. All that he dreaded was the permanency of his good resolutions. This letter was accom-

panied by others to his son and daughter, in which he conjured them not to place too implicit confidence in the seeming repentance of the reclaimed profligate. "Wait patiently, my beloved Eliza," said the prudent father, "until time shall give Mr. Gaylove a fair opportunity of proving whether the alteration in his conduct and habits of life is real or assumed. If the former, and my Eliza still wishes to unite her fate to his, I will no longer oppose her inclinations; but let me conjure her to act with extreme caution, since all her future happiness entirely depends on the sincerity of Edward's professions, the morality of his principles, and the purity of his actions."

This was more than Eliza had ventured to expect on the part of her father. It raised her spirits to all their former animation, and dimpled her face with the smiles of hope and expectation. It even occasioned her to relax a little in her conduct towards her lover, who soon learnt from his friend Henry the pleasing source of his

good fortune. More and more in love than ever with Eliza, he determined to improve the favourable opinion her relations had formed of his heart and mind, by abjuring every folly that could give them offence, and by devoting the chief of his time to them and to his Eliza; secretly hoping, that on his return to Bedfordshire he should be able to ask, with a good grace, her hand from her father, as he should then be sanctioned by the best wishes of her uncle and aunt, as well as those of his friend Henry.

CHAPTER IX.

Mrs. Monteith had now scarce a wish ungratified. Her husband and her little boy constituted all her felicity, which might be said to be almost too perfect for human nature. It is true that she would sometimes discover a transient cloud darken the heavenly expression of Monteith's counte-

nance; yet her kiss ever possessed the power to drive away every feeling from his mind but that of undiminished tenderness for herself. Nothing could exceed the affection which he manifested for his boy, who, to the delight of his fond mother, grew every month more like his father. Whole days would he sit and share with his Mary the pleasing fatigue of nursing their first blessing; and so completely was he taken up with these beloved beings, that even the good Mrs. Byron ventured to rally him sometimes upon his leading so retired a life; and even advised her favourite to use her influence over him, in order to gain his consent to their passing a few weeks at the house of Eliza's father.

Mrs. Monteith had been so strongly pressed by her young friend on the same subject, that she could not excuse herself from mentioning the additional wishes of Mrs. Byron to Monteith. He, however, appeared averse to their leaving home, unless indeed that she particularly de-

sired it. This was not the case with Mary, who, though sincerely attached to Eliza Hill, felt no inclination to leave her peaceful cottage, where she enjoyed undisturbed the never-failing kindness of her husband, and the smiles of her infant. Eliza was therefore obliged reluctantly to bid adieu to a family she tenderly loved, and with her brother, Mr. Gaylove, and Mildred, (for Lydia was now become the wife of the young merchant, and could not accompany them), she quitted the hospitable house of her uncle, and returned to her father's. Here she was, in a great measure, solaced for her disappointment, by the reception Mr. Richard Hill gave to the object of her affections. It was easy to be seen that Mr. Gaylove's conversion was real, and that he had actually abjured all those follies which had made him objectionable in the eyes of her father. Old Mr. Gaylove was so delighted with the appearance of his son, and the effect it had on his valued friend, that he declared that he would make a handsome addition to

the fortune he had designed for him, if Mr. Hill would consent to accept him for his son.

Henry, who was himself a votary of Cupid, pleaded so successfully for his reformed friend, as well as for himself, that the old gentleman could not refuse to sanction the wishes of his children; and it was settled that on the same day should be celebrated the nuptials of Henry and Mildred, Edward and Eliza. Having once consented to the match, the fathers were eager to name an early time for its consummation, and therefore Henry was commissioned to write to his uncle and aunt, to entreat their presence at the approaching ceremony.

The domestic happiness of Mrs. Monteith received an increase at this joyful intelligence, conveyed to her by the affectionate Eliza, who only regretted the want of her society at this critical moment—"Tell our dear Monteith," said the amiable girl, "that were it possible for me to entertain for him any other sentiment than that of sisterly affection, I should be seri-

ously angry at his refusing to let you be among us. My father longs to see you and my beloved godson. My absence from you, my dear friend, is the only alloy to my felicity; but I will hope that although disappointed of having you with me at the celebration of my marriage, yet that pleasure is still in store for me, and that you will either honour us with a visit in the autumn, or persuade captain Monteith to pass his Christmas in Bedfordshire."

To this last proposal Monteith at length consented, and it was therefore agreed that Mary might add to the delight of Eliza, by imparting to her this much-wished-for good news. Mrs. Byron also declined going until the time appointed by Donald, who, on his part, consented to the visit, more on account of gratifying those he loved than himself. For Eliza Hill he entertained a brotherly regard; in short, for all her family he felt the highest esteem; but his mind was, from circumstances, not capable of feeling that relish for society it

had once done. All his hopes and wishes, all his affections, centered in his wife and child; all his fear was lest the exquisite bliss he felt in their presence might be too great to last. This sacred dread would occasionally cast a damp on his spirits, and even call the tear of anguish into his eyes. It was then that Mrs. Monteith would anxiously inquire into the cause of his uneasiness, and entreat him to tell her if it arose from any thing in her conduct which he might wish to be altered.

"No, angelic Mary!" he would reply; "the cause originates with myself, not with you. The happiness I enjoy in calling you mine, in witnessing hourly fresh proofs of your tenderness, in knowing that for me you have relinquished every innocent enjoyment of the world, and are contented to lead a life of voluntary seclusion, seems too perfect to last. I fold you to my bosom with a love hardly to be equalled. I gaze with rapture on your countenance, which ever expresses the same undying;

affection for me, and I ask my own heart if I deserve that such felicity should continue to be my lot."

"And why not, my adored Donald?" said his Mary. "What should interrupt the domestic harmony of our lives? Our happiness rests with ourselves; it does not depend on any *human* will, and Heaven, who graciously permitted me to become your wife, and who gave to me so sweet, so dear a reward for the vexations of my childhood, will not mar that bliss itself created."

Monteith, nevertheless, could not silence the secret forebodings of his own mind, though he endeavoured to conceal them from his wife. Nor could the penetration and worldly experience of Mrs. Byron, however, be deceived. To her it was but too plain that Monteith was a prey to internal disquietude, and she could not avoid attributing this to some cause intimately connected with his Scottish relations. His silence upon the subject of his family, his evident wish always to

avoid naming them, his embarrassment whenever by accident any question was put to him concerning them, all helped to strengthen her suspicions, and she dreaded lest at some future time any thing might occur to injure the repose of his lovely and amiable Mary, for whom she felt an affection truly maternal.

Autumn was now far advanced; and as Mrs. Gaylove continued to press Monteith to make his visit earlier than he at first intended, he agreed to take a journey into Bedfordshire the first week in December, and to remain with them until the commencement of the new year; to accomplish which it was necessary that Monteith should be absent from home for the short space of two days. That his stay might not be longer, he proposed setting out by break of day. So unwilling, however, did he appear to quit his beloved Mary and her little boy, that he actually put off going until he could not find any more plausible excuses to make for his delay. The evening before his departure, Mrs. Byron

saw, with increasing uneasiness, the struggles which he made to conceal from his wife his extreme reluctance to quitting home. She saw him watch every movement of Mary; he seemed to follow her with the restless solicitude of a person who is in dread of having an adored object unexpectedly torn from him. Mrs. Monteith, at his request, played and sung several of his favourite airs; he praised her taste and execution, but he wanted spirits to accompany her.

On her leaving the room for a few minutes, to visit the chamber of her sleeping baby, Monteith took the hand of Mrs. Byron, and, pressing it affectionately, said, while his eyes were filled with tears, "Is not my Mary an angel? Oh, my dear friend! if I should lose her, how terrible would be my fate! It is now sixteen months that I have been the happiest of men! Dare I to hope that it will last?"

"Dearest Monteith!" replied Mrs. Byron, with a voice and manner which penetrated into the soul of Donald, "dearest

Monteith! are you serious? Are you indeed the happiest of men?"

"Oh, who that knows the heart of Mary can doubt the truth of my assertion? Since the blessed, thrice-blessed hour, which gave her to my arms, I have discovered no fault that she possesses; she is all that my romantic imagination ever pictured of woman, all that I wish her to be."

"I believe you, my amiable friend," said Mrs. Byron, "that you and Mary have but one heart, one mind, one soul, I am assured; yet there may exist causes, unconnected with her, which may prevent you from being the happiest of men, and which may account for that internal vexation which my watchful affection for you both has seen and lamented."

Monteith pressed her hand to his lips; he sighed deeply; he longed, yet feared, to divulge the secret which preyed upon his repose. Mrs. Byron met his eye; the expression of hers consoled and relieved him. "My son," she cried, "for such I have ever considered you, compose your-

self. Think not, I beseech you, that what I have uttered proceeds from any impertinent curiosity; on the contrary, my regard for you alone prompted me to hazard the risk of offending; I know that some private inquietude occasionally disturbs your felicity—my experience, my advice, might perhaps be of use to you. I am not unworthy your confidence."

"Of that I am well assured," replied Monteith; "my affection, my gratitude to you, is unbounded. I confess that I *have* a secret cause of uneasiness; but the disclosure would only render you, my worthy friend, unhappy, and perhaps weaken the regard you now feel for me; since your tenderness for Mary might lead you to condemn in *me* what you would pity in another. But hush! I hear her footsteps. I would not for the world that she knew the present state of my feelings, nor can I account for them to myself."

Mrs. Monteith now entered, with her infant, who in his night-clothes lay nestled close to the warm bosom of his mo-

ther. "You will spoil this young rogue, my beloved," said Monteith, "if you bring him into these bad habits of visiting after he is undressed."

"Blame yourself, my Donald," she replied; "he looked and smiled so like his father, that I could not resist his silent eloquence, so I was obliged to bring him with me." Monteith passed his arms round both his treasures, and, kissing the cheek of his little boy, put up a mental prayer for his preservation, since the existence of his mother seemed to be entwined with his.

When morning came, Monteith rose with increased reluctance; he could hardly assume firmness sufficient to leave home; yet he felt ashamed of shewing a weakness which would distress his wife, and draw down upon himself the censure of his best friends. He embraced his little boy with more than usual tenderness, kissing him repeatedly with an air of melancholy fondness, which at length called forth the attention of his mother.

"You will not fail, my dear Donald," said she, "to return by to-morrow night; if you should not, I shall be seriously unhappy."

"I know of nothing which can prevent me, my dearest Mary. To-morrow night I shall certainly be with you." Saying this, he again embraced her; and after cautioning her to take care of herself, and not to go out during his absence, he mounted his horse, followed by a faithful domestic, who had lived with him for some time, and on whose fidelity and affection he could rely.

They had not proceeded far on the road, when Monteith, checking his horse, said, "Alex, you shall call at the St. James's, and inquire if there are any letters for me. Go on first, that I may not lose any time." The man obeyed, and Monteith, whose mind was full of his beloved wife, was proceeding leisurely, when a hackney-coach passed rapidly by him; he caught a glimpse of a person inside; but it was so slight a one, that he soon gave up all idea of its

being the object he at first took him for. Clapping spurs to his horse, he galloped down Piccadilly, where he was met by his servant, who delivered him several letters, which had lain at the coffee-house near a fortnight. Monteith carelessly examined the different hand-writing of some of his acquaintance, but he turned pale on discovering among them that of the identical person he had imagined he had just seen. The post-mark, however, was from Scotland, and his spirits revived. Not choosing to open it before he was alone, he placed it in his pocket-book, and continued his journey, though, had he followed the dictates of his heart, and the forebodings of his reason, he would have immediately returned home.

How perfectly inexplicable are the secret presentiments we have of approaching evil! yet, if attended to, how seldom would they prove erroneous! Monteith had no just cause for the extreme reluctance he felt to leave his wife and child for so short a space as two days, nevertheless

his spirits sank and his heart died within him; he could scarcely have felt more, had he been going to be separated from her for ever.

Mrs. Monteith, meanwhile, experienced no other sensation than what merely arose from the conviction that for so many hours she should be bereaved of his beloved society. Doting on him to excess, she could not help feeling uneasy even at this short separation. In order, therefore, to dissipate her chagrin, she busied herself in making some little alteration in their sitting-room, which she knew would call forth his approbation when he returned.

In the midst of her employment, she heard a loud ring at the garden bell; but thinking it might be Mrs. Byron, she only sent Betty, who was nursing her little boy, to inform her where she was. Betty returned, followed by a gentleman, whom Mrs. Monteith instantly recognized as the stranger she had seen at Hampton Court. Faint and sick from the immediate fear of impending misfortune, she could hardly

command her voice to request him to be seated. The stranger cast on her a look of surprise and pity, as he took a chair close by hers. His age, and the mild expression of his eyes, the pensive cast of his countenance, and the gentleness of his voice, a little reasssured her, and she ventured to look at him as she replied to his question of when would captain Monteith be at home?

"To-morrow night," said the stranger; "to-morrow you expect him. Pardon me, madam, but may I ask if this is *your* home likewise? and if that infant which I saw is yours? I need not inquire who is its father; the fatal beauty of Monteith is already stamped in its countenance; but I trust in God that *you* are not its mother!"

"Sir!" replied Mary, alarmed and astonished. "Sir, I do not comprehend you!"

"Poor girl!" cried the stranger, taking her hand compassionately. "My business is of a nature which I would fain conceal

from you, were it possible. Did I not see you with captain Monteith and another young lady at Hampton Court? Ah, how little did I think that so sweet a girl was destined to be the victim of his duplicity!"

"You insult me, sir!" cried Mary, withdrawing her hand from his grasp. "Whatever may be the nature of your business with captain Monteith, it cannot authorise you to wound the ears of his wife by your unmanly and unjust reproaches."

"His wife!" exclaimed the stranger, in a tone of astonishment and anger. "And has captain Monteith dared to delude you with the sacred name of wife, which it was not in his power to bestow? I thought him culpable, I thought him cruel, but now I think him a villain."

Mary rose; she motioned to ring the bell; but, unable, she sunk on her chair, and burst into tears.

"What have I done!" said the stranger, rising hastily, and taking her hand in his—"Oh, forgive me, lovely creature! for

adding to your distress. Have you a father or mother, to whom I can communicate my painful business?"

Mary continued motionless. She felt convinced that all was not right—that the dreaded secret of Monteith was about to be divulged. Raising her eyes mournfully to the face of the stranger, she said, in a voice which pierced him to the soul, "I have no father! no mother! I lost them in my infancy. Oh, sir! if you are a parent, do not trifle with the feelings of one who dotes to an excess on him whom you have vilified—on him who amply supplies the place of those dear relations! Tell me at once the meaning of your visit, and of your mysterious words. To no other would I condescend to ask such a question; but your appearance, your manner, compel me to listen to you."

The stranger pressed her hand respectfully to his lips—"Alas!" he replied, "I know not how to begin a subject which must pierce you to the soul, and call forth sentiments in my own bosom, which the

sight of your loveliness and youth restrained. Have you no friend whose presence might be consoling, whose advice might be serviceable at this moment?"

"Great God!" exclaimed Mrs. Monteith, "what does all this mean? Oh, sir, you look as if you were incapable of inflicting such severe anguish as that I now suffer from your mysterious language. Trifle no longer, I beseech you, with my feelings; but tell me at once what is your business, and by what right you have bestowed on my beloved Donald the dreadful epithet of villain?"

Fortunately for Mrs. Monteith, just at this instant her maternal friend arrived, and, on entering the apartment, testified some surprise at seeing Mary engaged. The latter immediately flung herself on her bosom, and, by the deep sobs she uttered, alarmed Mrs. Byron, and again excited the warmest compassion in the mind of the stranger.

"For Heaven's sake! my dear child," cried Mrs. Byron, "what has happened to

cause this distress?—Where is captain Monteith?"

Mary could only point to the stranger, who never in his life felt himself more painfully situated. The eyes of Mrs. Byron, however, called on him for an explanation of his visit.

"I perceive, madam," said he, "that you are the friend of this interesting young person; and that to you I may safely communicate the important business which led me here." Mrs. Byron bowed. "She has won me to her cause; I feel for her situation; and, were it possible, would spare her the bitter anguish which awaits her. This, however, is not in my power. I can no longer refuse to enforce the strong claim which another amiable and unfortunate being has upon Monteith. I can no longer submit silently to behold the object of my parental pride and affection gradually sinking into the grave, neglected, despised, and abandoned, while he for whom she dies bestows not a thought on her, but leaves her to her fate; while he

enjoys that happiness of which he has robbed her for ever."

The stranger, overcome, hid his face with his handkerchief. Mary had raised her head during his narration; at the conclusion she clasped her hands wildly together, and sunk nearly senseless in the arms of the terrified Mrs. Byron.

The stranger first recovered; he rose, and, seating himself on the couch by the side of Mrs. Monteith, took her cold hand in his, while Mrs. Byron, weeping and trembling, with difficulty supported her. "Who is this sweet girl," he inquired, in a voice of real solicitude, "whose future years are thus cruelly doomed to misery? Oh that I could ward off the blow which has stunned her, and yet save my Agnes! Ah, madam! you look upon me, I see, as the destroyer of your friend! You know not my heart; even for Monteith I feel, though he has ruined my peace for ever."

"There is a something, sir, in your appearance," replied the weeping Mrs. By-

ron, "which commands me to respect you. "I suspect, I fear, that my beloved Mary has innocently been the cause of injuring your peace. Yet, sir, who could imagine, who could believe for a moment, that, in the sight of Heaven, a man like Monteith would perjure himself at the foot of the altar."

"My God! and is it possible that he has deceived this lovely creature into a belief that he was single? Poor girl! poor girl! what will become of her and her infant, madam? I cannot feel more for my own Agnes than I do for her." The tears of the stranger now fell rapidly on the cheek of Mary, while he assisted Mrs. Byron to recover her, if possible, from her dangerous lethargy. Mrs. Byron, in a few words, related the commencement of her intimacy with captain Monteith; his marriage, and the occasional fits of melancholy she had noticed in him, which, together with his mysterious silence respecting his family, had for some time excited her fears that all was not right.

your fond dreams of love and bliss, let me request that you would do justice to my deep regret that such a proceeding is inevitable. Let me assure you that, if you abide by my advice, I will befriend you—I will be, in short, a father to you and to your infant—I will do my utmost to serve you; but you must renounce all claim on him whom you have been led to believe is your husband."

"Go on, go on, I beseech you," cried Mary, wildly. "I am on the brink of a fearful precipice, and it is your hand which will hurl me down it."

"Not for the world! I would, on the contrary, conduct you to the shelter of some peaceful home, where you might forget that you have been deceived into the cruel belief that you were the lawful wife of Monteith."

"Who, then, has a right to that sacred name but myself?—who dares dispute with me the heart of Monteith?"

"Agnes Graham, my dear and much-injured daughter," replied the stranger,

with a look and manner from which even Mary shrunk, who, covering her face, motioned him to continue. "The father of Monteith and I have been friends from our boyhood, and our children, by constantly associating with each other, naturally became attached. The fatal beauty of Donald, the irresistible fascination of his manners, made early a deep impression on my daughter Agnes; but her disposition is so mild, so gentle, and unassuming, that she strove to hide what she supposed was a vain passion in her, who had merely a pleasing exterior when compared to the beauty of the sisters of Monteith. Yet, for what she was deficient in personal charms, her mind and heart made ample amends. She is one of the most amiable of her sex. Nearly three years ago, Monteith, who had been absent with his regiment, revisited Scotland. I loved him as a son; his family all looked anxiously forward to his selecting their favourite Agnes for a wife; they taught her to believe that he was sensible of her merits; that, in short, he

meant to offer her his hand. I was from home a few days, during which time she was a guest at his father's. On my return I was informed that Donald had become the husband of Agnes."

Mary broke from the arms of Mrs. Byron, and suddenly catching up the hand of Mr. Graham, exclaimed, "Cruel man! I dare not believe you! Oh that my Donald was here to vindicate his own wounded honour!"

"Alas! he cannot," replied the compassionate stranger. "His heart may be yours, but he must yield to the prior claim of Agnes. I discovered, when too late, by his flight—for he quitted her the day after their union—that the rash friendship of his father and sisters had bound him to my daughter, but that his affections were free."

Mary groaned in anguish, but she could not interrupt him; her heart appeared to be turning to stone; she scarce seemed to breathe.

"In the hope that the patient forbearance of my Agnes might work upon the

humanity of Monteith, I forbore to assert her right to be acknowledged as his wife. The sweetness of her disposition made her averse to use any harsh means towards obtaining her wishes. His father, however, was incensed at his persevering to disown the legality of his marriage; and, in order to prevent any disagreeable consequences, which would have been mortifying to my daughter's gentle nature, I came to England at the period when I saw you at Hampton Court. I then gave him a letter from Agnes, and another from his father. I persuaded him to visit Scotland; he consented. He came—he saw Agnes—he owned her to be one of the best women in the world; but he likewise owned that he could not bring himself to love, or to acknowledge her for his wife. He left us, and we still hoped that time might effect what alone could heal the wounds his obstinacy had inflicted. Months passed away. With difficulty I could restrain the indignation of his father, who has disinherited him, and who

has declared that he shall never consider him as a son until he performs the part of a man of honour. Feeling deeply the humiliating situation of my child, I yet refrained from any act which could increase the dislike of Donald to the union; but, on being informed by a friend who resides in England, and who had heard that Monteith was married, and become a father, a sense of what was due to my daughter's character brought me to London; I have drawn the sword of justice; I will not sheathe it again until Agnes is acknowledged as his wife."

Mrs. Byron cast a look of agony on Mary—"Speak to me, my child," said she, embracing her. "Tell me how you are; tell me that you forgive me for the part I took in what has proved your ruin. Oh, Heaven! that I could be so deceived!—that Monteith could act so basely!"

"And do *you*, my friend, conspire against my adored Donald? Do *you* condemn him unheard? Oh thou Supreme Power! bear witness to the constancy of

that affection which he alone could inspire!—Bear witness that at this moment my heart beats as tenderly for him as ever; and if it is true, sir, what you tell me—if, indeed, I am to believe that your daughter has, by some means or other, become the wife of Monteith; it is for *him* I feel, not for myself; without him I cannot exist. Life would be a burthen unless passed by his side. I can die; but who will he find to fill up the blank in his heart which my death must occasion? Oh, my beloved, my adored Monteith!" she continued, falling on one knee at the foot of the couch, "I will be thine, thine only; even in death they shall not divide us."

The stranger raised her kindly, and supported her in his arms. "I will not mock you," said he, "with the word comfort; I will not insult you, my sweet girl, by preaching to you at a moment like this, when my own feelings tell me that time can alone restore you to composure. Yet listen to me as if I were your father; be guided by me and this excellent lady. Al-

though compelled in justice to my beloved Agnes to enforce her right, my heart still bleeds for your sufferings, and would fain mitigate them by every means in my power. To your own delicacy, your own sense of justice and honour, I now appeal. It is you alone who can restore to Agnes the husband she has lost."

"Gracious Heaven! you ask too much, sir, indeed you do!" said Mrs. Byron; "you ask more than human nature is able to perform."

"And yet not more than I am confident this sweet girl will accede to."

"What do you require of me?" demanded Mary, in a convulsive tone.

"Ask your own heart, my dear child," replied Mr. Graham. "You have been deceived by him who was bound to hold sacred your orphan state; you have been degraded by a mock marriage; you have given birth to an infant who has no legal right to the name of his father! What line of conduct does your heart teach you to pursue?"

"Oh you have never loved with the enthusiasm that I do," said Mary, wildly, "or you would not ask that question. No sense of personal injury can alter my firm affection for Monteith. His unabated tenderness, his never-failing lenity to my faults, his gentleness and constancy, above all, my conviction that he prefers me to the whole world, call forth an equal return from me. Too well do I now comprehend the meaning of his mysterious words, his secret inquietude! Yes, Monteith, thy Mary's love still rises superior to all personal disgrace. While I exist, thou wilt be adored—ever be considered as the best and dearest gift of Heaven."

"If no consideration of shame which is attached to the name of mistress (Mary gave a convulsive start) can awaken your just resentment, let me appeal to that sense of honour which is inherent in all your family. Think what must be the situation of my daughter, who is legally the *wife* of Monteith; what her feelings on being told, that not contented with having quit-

ted her the day after her union—that not contented with having consigned her to a life of eternal regret, he cruelly inflicts on her the deepest insult, by abandoning her for another, and thus compelling her to come forward in a court of justice to obtain what is only her due. Oh, if you knew the virtues of Agnes, her patient resignation to the unfeeling desertion of her husband, her unwillingness even now to appear against him, her dread of incurring his resentment, as well as his dislike, you would not hesitate for a moment to act according to the opinion I have formed of your character. You would prove that love, which has hitherto absorbed your soul, and engrossed all your attentions, could yet give place to a noble and generous sense of honour."

"My child," said Mrs. Byron, "this shock is too great for you; retire for a short time to your chamber. Heaven, who has thought fit to inflict the blow, will not fail to endue you with fortitude to bear it. Come, my dear Mary, lean on

me for support. I will return to you, sir, in a few minutes."

The stranger assisted in leading Mary to her room; he again assured her of his willingness to serve her, and returned to the parlour, deeply affected by her situation, and secretly determined to afford her all the consolation in his power.

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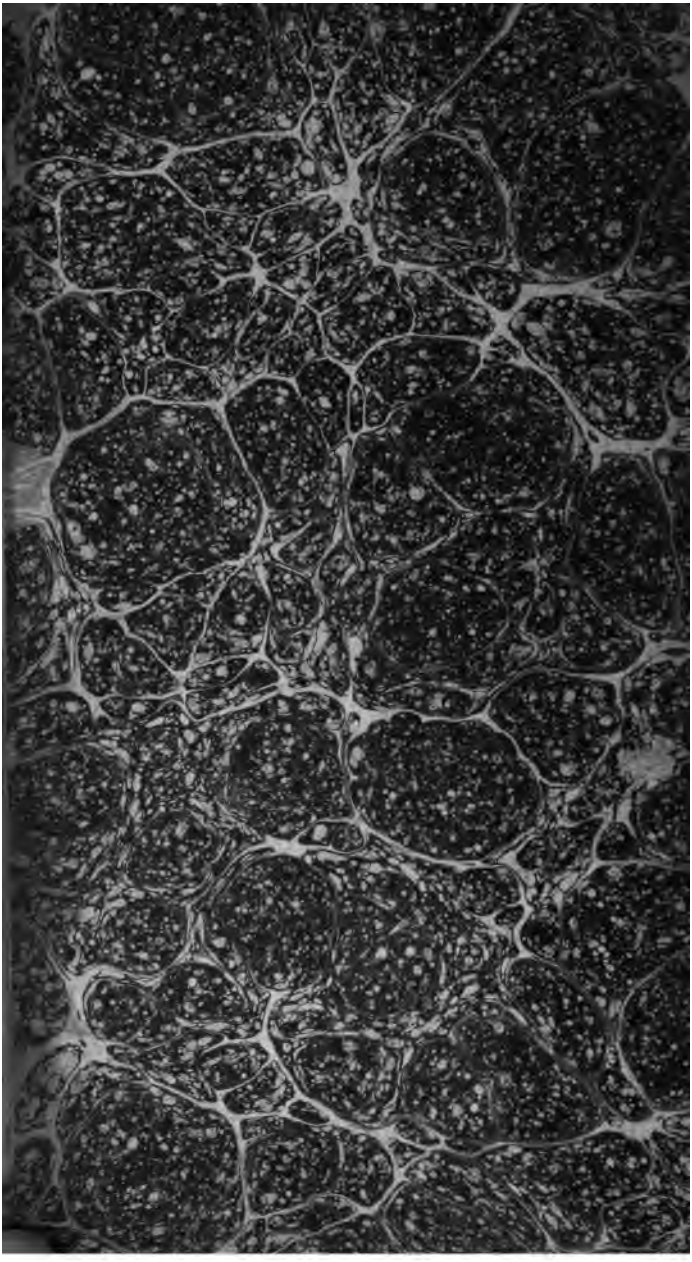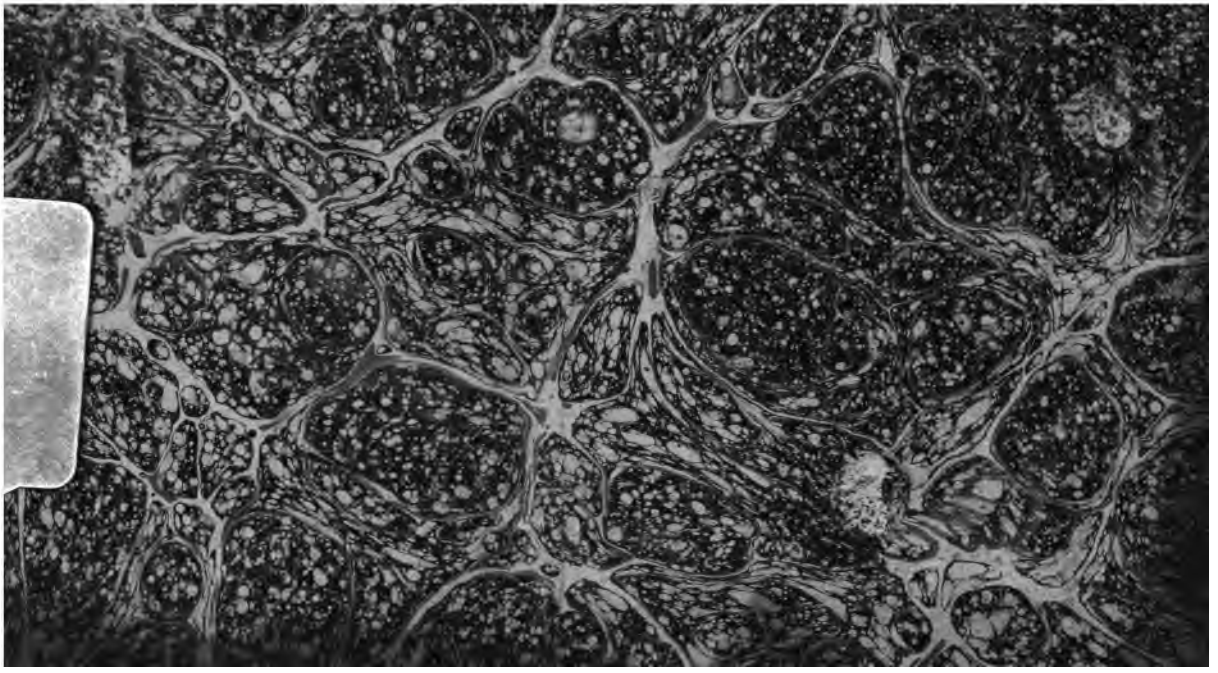
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